

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Several weeks ago I went to WalMart for a few things. As I closed my tailgate after loading up, a woman parked beside me got out of her car and asked if I would like to hear about how to find joy in my life. In her left hand was a pamphlet with two bold letters across the top: J W. Being no stranger to Jehova Witness' theology, I struck an agreement with her. I'd give her five minutes to tell me about her Jesus and I would get five minutes to tell her about mine. She agreed. **There is no more important question you will ever answer than "Who is Jesus?"**

Matthew 16:13-17 Now when Jesus came unto the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

That question is still being asked today. Who is Jesus, really? Or, **more often** the question is framed as "Who **was** Jesus?"

According to the **Barna Research group**:

1. The **vast majority** of Americans believe Jesus to have been a **real person**, a historical figure
2. **Younger generations** are **less likely** to believe that **Jesus was more** than just a man
3. Americans are **divided** as to whether Jesus lived a sinless life.

Nearly everything else about his life **generates enormous**, and sometimes rancorous, debate."

Well, John, the author of the Gospel of John, the disciple Jesus loved, tells us his purpose in writing his gospel.

John 20:30-31 "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name."

When I was a senior at the University of Alabama, the **Director of Campus Crusade for Christ** said at a Sunday evening gathering, that if you are ever **privileged** to pray with someone to receive Christ **as their Savior**, encourage them in every way you can to read the Gospel of John **three times!!** Three times!! He said that the Gospel of John presents Christ **in His fullness** like none of the other gospels and **unlike anywhere** else in Scripture.

And John **begins the Prologue** of his gospel by introducing the **Greek term LOGOS**, or the **WORD**. **Five hundred years** before Jesus was born, **Heraclitus**, a **Greek philosopher** used Logos to explain what he saw as the **universal force of reason that governed everything**. He said **all things happen** according to the Logos. This **system of thought** came to be known as **stoicism** and **Greek speaking Jews** came to view the Logos as a **force sent by God**. By utilizing

Logos, John immediately captured the attention of **both Jews and Greeks**. But he was also **being true to Scripture**.

John's desire was that those who read his words would **come to believe** that Jesus is the **Christ**, the **Son** of the Living God and that by believing they would **have life** in His name. So **John begins** his gospel with a **Prologue**, a Prologue so **majestic and transcendent** that it challenged the **legalistic and educated Jew** and the **philosophically adept Greek** to consider **eternity, creation, existence, purpose and reason** and, **most importantly**, the man Jesus Christ, **through** a completely different lense. It would **draw them** in or **push them away**, it would **catch their attention** or cause them to **scoff**, but it would **engage** them as nothing they'd heard or read before.

John presents a **view of God** that incorporates **realities** that they **already knew but** with the **addition of one reality** that **shattered the chasm** they had created **separating** them from the Creator God of the universe. This Prologue **sets the table** for John's complete message. And it is a **message of such transcendence** that it takes us to a place we've never been before **quite like this**; to the beginning **when God created**. It takes us there in the **first few verses** but pulls together **thousands of years of God's sovereign plan**.

John Calvin said of John's Prologue, "**In this Prologue John declares Christ's eternal divinity, to teach us that He is the eternal God, manifest in the flesh...we do not forsake the one eternal God when we embrace and believe in Christ.**"

Frederick Dale Bruner had this to say: "**One feels on holy ground when entering the Prologue to the Gospel of John. Here we have the overture to the symphony of the whole gospel, the preface to the greatest story every told, the introduction to history's central fact, the forward to the last Word and the preamble to the realities and Truth most trusted by the worldwide church.**"

Frederick Lois Godet said this: "**If the supreme divinity ascribed to Jesus is denied Him, however worthy of admiration this Christ may be, humanity may and should always 'look for another'. Faith is not faith.... except so far as it has for its object that beyond which it is impossible to go.**" **REPEAT**

Are we able to go beyond the beginning of time?

Listen to the words of John! The Word of God.

"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 by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.....

The true light, which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know Him. He came unto His own and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name,

He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made Him known.”

John 1:1-5, 9-18

Speech has been called the **expression of the thoughts of men**. And **God expresses Himself** to us by His speech or **His Word**, so it is **not by accident** that **John begins** his gospel as **Moses** began Genesis, **“In the beginning.”** Genesis begins ‘in the beginning’ and then **proceeds with a flurry** God’s creative activity through His spoken word: **“God said, let there be light, and there was light”**

“And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters...’”

“And God said, ‘Let the earth sprout, vegetation, plants yielding seed..’”

And God’s creative Word ended with “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

And God looked out over all that He had made and said that “It was very good.”

John begins his gospel with **“in the beginning”** as well but gives us a deeper dive into **who created** and not so much **what was created**.

Before we dive in to our text, a few words about God’s creation. We know **Psalm 19:1** says **“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”**

Well all of creation declares the Glory of the Triune God. Think with me. A TRINITY cannot be separated or disconnected in any way from each **“piece” or “Person”** of the whole. **So it follows** that the universe God created **is a precise illustration of God’s Triune nature**. The universe is **one thing** containing **separately definable and distinguishable entities** that **cannot be taken apart**. We can **distinguish** the different elements and we can **define and describe** the different **functions** of those elements **but we cannot conceive of a way to take them apart**. Think of it.

The Trinity of Creation

SPACE: Space is that **in which all else exists**. We **conceive** of it as **height, depth and length** but we **cannot capture or eliminate it**. It is **not nothing** but we **cannot discover it fully**. Space

is **in all things** and **all things have their** existence in space. Nothing exists outside of space **except the Creator** of space

MATTER: Matter reveals space to us and **makes things visible**. We see matter as a **person place or thing**. Without visible matter **our brain would be unable to process the idea of space**.

TIME: **Mark Twain** said that, “Time is what keeps everything happening at once.” Time is the **third element** of the **tri-unity of the universe**. We think of **past, present and future**. **God presents** time to us as ‘**in the beginning**’ and we are told to **look for the ‘new’** and we are told **we can live eternally**.

All things are experienced in time. **Space and matter** are experienced in Time. **Time cannot be separated or removed from any of the universe**.

Think of God the **Father as ‘space’**, Jesus Christ, **God the Son as Matter** and the **Holy Spirit as time**. Three in one, **inseparable**, three distinct persons----one God who created everything.

So John begins his gospel with the same three words as Genesis, “**In the beginning**” but John looks backward **before creation and to who God was and is, not so much what He did**. And he begins by **introducing either a creative power, as the Greeks believed, or another God**, as **some Jews contended or something so completely different that it would shatter the common conceptions about all of reality**.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

There are three critical truths about “the Word” in John’s prologue.

1. **Pre-Existence** “**In the beginning was the Word**” If the Word was with God in the beginning when God created everything that exists, then the **Word was not part of the time and space created**. The Word was and is **eternal, continuously existing already when creation began**. Put another way, **the Word (Jesus) existed before time** and therefore is **outside of time** and therefore **Eternal**.

THERE WAS NEVER A TIME The Word (JESUS) DID NOT EXIST. John says ‘**with**’ twice for emphasis.

The Word was “**living and active**” as we read in Hebrews (Hebrews 12:4) even before “**the Word became flesh**”

And you certainly remember Jesus’ words to the Jews who said “**You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?**” And Jesus said to them, “**Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was, I AM.**”

Some other passages to consider in this context:

Jonah 1:1 and 3:1 “The **Word** of the Lord came to Jonah and said...”

1 Samuel 3:21 “And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the **Lord revealed Himself to Samuel** at Shiloh by the Word of the Lord.”

Genesis 12:7 “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’”

There are others like this in the Old Testament record:

The Lord said....The Lord appeared.....The Word of the Lord came to....

The very use of the word “**Appearance**” implies **visibility**. That is God appeared to man in a way that **He could be seen** but Scripture tells us that “**No one has seen God at any time**” God said, “**No man can see me and live**” John says in verse 18 at the end of our text, “**No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known.**”

Two terms you may be familiar with: **Theophany** and **Christophany**. **Theophany** is an appearance of God like in the **burning bush**, or the **Shekinah glory** in the desert that lighted up the **night sky** and the **cloud** of His presence that cooled Israel by day. A **Christophany** is a **pre-incarnate** appearance of Jesus Christ **Himself, the Living Word**. Those who embrace this concept think it to be **Jesus who walked in the garden** with Adam and Eve. It was Jesus who **appeared as the King of Salem, Melchizadek**. Jesus was the **commander of the army of the Lord in Joshua** and the Angel of the Lord who is mentioned three or four times. Perhaps it was the Pre-Incarnate Christ that **wrestled with Jacob**. The point is:

There was never a time that the Word, Jesus, did not exist. Pre-Existence. “In the beginning was the Word.”

2. Co-Existence (with God) “...and the word was with God (2x)”

The Word is placed **above the world** and **all creatures** and before **all ages**. The Word has a **existence all it’s own**. He has an **identity all ‘HIS’ own**. The Word has **divine essence**. He is **eternally existent AND distinct** from God the Father.

WITH----- IN THE COMPANY OF. A separate and distinct being/person.

In John chapter 17 in the conversation at the center of the universe (God the Son speaking with God the Father, Scripture tells us, “**When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted His eyes toward heaven and said ‘Father, the hour has come.; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began or before the world existed.**”

Gerrit introduced us to the phrase “**subversion of expectation**” not too long ago. It is a **writing technique** that introduces **something unexpected**, something almost **misdirectional** and John uses this twice. The **Jews and Greeks** have their understanding of what the Word meant but John says, “**The Word was God**” (not a **power** or **force of reason**). Then John introduces the **personal pronoun, HE**, making this Word a **person**: “**He was in the beginning with God.**” Wham!!!! Those **philosophical Greeks** and those **theological, studious Jews** are having to **rethink** their **assumptions**, their **imaginary reality**. This Word is not some **ethereal, transcendent power but a person, a divine person**. A person who was in the beginning, who was **with God** in the beginning and **participating** with God in **creation. He was God.**

So are there two gods?

John says, “**All things were made by Him (the Word) and without Him was not anything made that was made.**”

In Genesis 1:2 Scripture tells us that the “**Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.**”

Not only was HE there with God **but the Holy Spirit** was there as well. The whisper of Trinity gets louder and louder.

One author said, “**He (the Word) demonstrated His divinity by His works. That is, the Word of God came forth to outward action immediately from the creation of the world. Previously he was incomprehensible in His essence with the Father but now is openly known by His power.**”

3. Self-Existent with God

Proverbs 8:27-33 No doubt that Jesus read these words with a clear memory “**When He established the heavens, I was there. When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters might not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him like a master workman.**”

Psalm 33:6 “**By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of His mouth all their host. For He spoke and it came to be; He commanded and it stood firm.**”

The writer of the Book of Hebrews saw clearly what happened when the word became flesh.

Hebrews 1:1-2 “**Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son (the Living Word), who He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.**”

1 Corinthians 8:6 Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

Acts 17 28 “...in Him (Jesus) we live and move and have our being.”

Colossians 1:17 “And He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.”

This Jesus, this second person of the Triune God, this eternally existing person with God, was and is God all through the power of the third person of the Trinity, Holy Spirit. And this Jesus, this Living Word “became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

This is John’s message--- the divine nature of Christ, His divinity, for this is who Christ is. The eternal God Himself has become human, He has become like us, he has taken on the very flesh that He created, he breathed the air that we breathe, the creator has become a part of His creation, fully God and fully man.

And why? Because God so loved His creation that He sent His Son to save it. He became flesh and dwelt among us in order that He might save sinners from their sin, death, judgment and eternal separation from God. That is the message of the Gospel of John. The eternal God, infinite, transcendent, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, everlastingly unchanging, that one true living God has become a man.

“And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Faster than the speed of light John takes us from ‘the beginning’ when God in three persons created space and time and matter to the coming of this same Creator God in flesh, as Gerrit would say, in our skin suit.

Before we conclude we must consider for a few minutes Christ’s humanity.

1. Jesus did not cease to be God.

Colossians 1:15-20 “He IS the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through Him and for Him. And He IS before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He IS the head of the body, the church. He IS the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”

2. Jesus became fully man. Born of a woman.

He became man by taking on human nature in addition to his divine nature. Divinity and humanity are not mutually exclusive. Flesh is not just a reference to the human body but the entirety of what makes up humanity- body, mind, emotions and will.

It is clear enough from the NT that Jesus was **fully human physically**: he was **born** of a woman, he **grew**, he got **tired**, he got **thirsty and hungry**, he became **physically weak** and he **died**. In all of his interactions he clearly **displays human emotions**. His **soul was sorrowful**, he was **deeply moved** and **greatly troubled**. He **offered up prayers and supplications** with loud **cries and tears**. **Jesus wept**.

Hebrews 2:17 **Therefore He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiations for the sins of the people.**

He shared our humanity completely!

Human Body Human Emotions Human Mind Human Will

HUMAN MIND

Luke 2:52 **“Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”**

Matt. 13:32 **“Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son but only the Father.”**

Divine Mind

John 16:30, 21:17

Now we know that you (Jesus) know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe you came from God.....(Peter) ‘Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you.’”

We simply cannot fathom what it would be like for one person to have both a human mind and a divine mind. Scripture says that Jesus knows all things as God and doesn’t know all things as man. It is a paradox that adds to the peculiar glory of the God-man Jesus Christ.

HUMAN WILL

Jesus not only has a divine will but also a human will.

John 6:38 **“I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”**

Matt. 26:39 **“Not as I will, but as you will.”**

Jesus has an infinite, divine will that is the will of His Father. And as man, he has a finite, human will that is perfectly in sync with and submissive to the divine will. It is a great mystery. He is fully God and fully man. At Christmas Jesus took on our full humanity and then took that true humanity all the way to the cross for us.

Jesus took a human body to save our bodies.

He took a human mind to save our minds.

Without becoming a man in his emotions, he could not have rescued our hearts. And without taking a human will, he could not save our broken and wavering wills.

In the words of **Gregory of Nazianzus**, **“That which he has not assumed he has not healed.”**

This is the message of all Scripture.

Listen to God’s Word:

Philippians 2:5-11 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Before the world began
The Father had a plan
His Son to give, that we might live
Through the life of the Son of Man

John 20:30-31

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

1 John 5:13

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.”