

John 1:1 - 18. (focusing on 1 - 3, 14)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1 Read the passage See Notes on the Prologue, and The Word

Q1. What is the Word? ([1:1](#))

Q2. What is the relationship between the Word and God? ([1:1-2](#))

Q2b. How do you think the Word can be the same as God yet different?

Q3. What was the Word's role in creation? ([1:3](#))

Q4. How did the Word make His dwelling among us? ([1:14](#))

Q5. What description would we use to connect with today's society?

(God the Word, God is Love, God is Judgement and Hell, God is eternal life ?)

Notes

The "Prologue"

The "Prologue" differs in language and style from the rest of the gospel. Not least because it's very hard. We read it every Christmas Eve and probably most people there haven't a clue what it's about. Tonight you will know.

Gospel moves from abstract to story - v19 (Clip LOTR 1 or Twilight 2)

What is John doing?

Well the first page of a book usually decides whether you will read the rest...

And John had a problem --

The Christian church had begun in Judaism. In the beginning all its members had been Jews. By human descent Jesus was a Jew, and, to all intents and purposes, except for one or two brief visits over the border, he was never outside Palestine. Christianity began amongst the Jews; and inevitably it spoke in the Jewish language and used Jewish ways of thinking. But although it was cradled in Judaism it very soon went out into the wider world. Within thirty years of Jesus' death it had travelled all over Asia Minor and Greece

and had arrived in Rome. By A.D. 60 there must have been hundreds of Greeks in the church for every Jew who was a Christian.

Jewish ideas were completely strange to the Greeks. For example, the very centre of Jewish expectation, the coming of the Messiah, was an idea that was quite alien to the Greeks. The ways in which the Jewish Christians thought of and presented Jesus meant nothing to them. Here then was the problem - how was Christianity to be presented to the Greek world?

The apostle John lived in a Greek city - Ephesus. He dealt with Greeks. How could he find a way to present Christianity to these Greeks in a way that they would welcome and understand? So John begins his gospel by writing in terms of Greek philosophy. That's why this bit is so different.

In particular John find something which is meaningful in both Greek and Jewish thought. It is the idea of "the Word"...

The Word

A strange name for something -- it's a bit like "The Doctor" in Dr Who.

Who calls himself "The Word" and what is it?

Jewish Meaning

In the Old Testament The Word stood for something more than just words.

Look up Genesis 1:1, 3, 6, 11. (Incidentally do the first three words sound familiar?)

God spoke and things happened. The Word of God is more than a sound -- it does things. The Word of God is a creative active thing. It's the way God expresses himself. People know what we are like by our words (!), our expressions of ourselves.

So the Jewish idea developed of The Word being a part of God that was somehow separate from God himself. Confusing? Hold it there and let's look at Greek thought

Greek Meaning

The Greek philosophers (in fact a philosopher from Ephesus where John was) had an expression for the force that had created the universe. That expression was "Logos". When translated it means "reason". Everything in the universe was controlled by reason. Logos, or reason, was nothing less than the mind of God, controlling the world and everyone in it -- stopping it descending into chaos.

Now, in translation sometimes words have more than one meaning "Logos" can be translated reason, but it can also be translated as "The Word".

Get it? Here was the idea that both Greeks and Jews could understand.

If you are with me so far, we could go a little further. Interestingly the Jews also had the idea of reason, or wisdom as creating the world. See Proverbs Chapter 8:22-31

Jesus - The Word

What has all this to do with Jesus? Look at verse 14 - read.

What is this saying about Jesus? That Jesus is the Logos, the Word, the Reason - come down to earth in human form. That Jesus is God.

A. That he was pre-existent -- verse 1-- read -- means He was there before creation. He had always existed.

a. "In the beginning does not mean from the beginning. Jesus Christ was already there. He did not become; He was not created; He never had a beginning. He "was in the beginning with God"

B. That he was coexistent

Verse 1- "the Word was with God." He was and is face to face with God forever. The word "with" has the idea of both being with and acting toward. Jesus Christ (the Word) was both with God and acting with God. He was "with God": by God's side, acting, living, and moving in the closest of relationships.

Christ had the ideal and perfect relationship with God the Father. Their life together—their relationship, communion, fellowship, and connection—was a perfect eternal bond.

C. That he was self-existent

John did not say that "the Word" was the God. He says "the Word" was God He omits the definite article. John was saying that "the Word," Jesus Christ...

is of the very nature and character of God the Father, but He is not the identical person of God the Father.

is a distinct person from God the Father, but He is of the very being and essence (perfection) of God the Father.

When a man sees Christ, he sees a distinct person, but he sees a person who is of the very substance and character of God in all of His perfect being.

Conclusion

John's gospel begins with one of the most difficult doctrines in Christianity -- the Trinity. When John talks about the sameness between the Word and God, yet also indicates difference, he raises a problem that Christians have always accepted but took a few hundred years to resolve (AD 325).

John then introduces the second most difficult of Christian teachings -- the Incarnation. Like the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the incarnation took some time to develop formally (452 AD), even though the church always accepted the fact that Jesus was both human and divine at the same time.

The church declared that the second person of the Trinity - the Son - added a full-blown human nature (minus any actual sin) to his deity, yet without changing anything in the divine nature. So while remaining fully God and without any alterations to his deity, the Son joined himself to a real human nature in the virgin womb of Mary.

Only the Son became incarnate; neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit took to themselves a human nature. The Son alone is fully divine in one nature and fully human in another nature.

And these two natures, though joined in one person, do not mix characteristics (for example, the human nature cannot become all-powerful, and the divine nature can't grow weak), nor are they separated from one another. Therefore Jesus Christ is the one Person possessing two distinct natures that make him in every way unique -- the God/man.