

## *“In the Beginning”*

**Genesis 1:1-5; John 1:1-14**

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### Introduction

- I tend to be pretty brand loyal; Natalie can tell you.
- I'm driving my third Hyundai, I tend to get the same brands in stores, too.
  - o So, I immediately know when the company has done that thing that they all do.
    - Shrinkflation
      - I can remember, for example, when the bratwurst brand that I buy had six bratwursts instead of the five that they presently have.
      - I think what's worse is when they change formulas, use cheaper ingredients.
        - o It looks the same but the product has changed
- Just recently, I got a Mr. Goodbar and noticed the chocolate had changed, it was cheaper, had more wax in it or something.
  - o Et tu, Mr. Goodbar?
- Everything changes so fast nowadays, I know I', sounding old but it's true.
  - o Even websites change their looks pretty frequently now.
- With all the change in the world, it can get to be a pretty annoying place.
  - o It may even be frightening, I get that.
  - o I mean, 30 years ago a man was a man and a woman was a woman and that worked pretty well, nowadays, not so much.
- That's why I love John's gospel so much.
  - o That and I took a very special class with a very special man.
    - Moral Vision of the New Testament – Richard Hays
      - President of Duke Divinity and a great man.
      - I emailed him last year, he emailed me back, letting me know what was going on (he was fighting cancer).
  - o Took a class with Richard Hays on the Gospel of John and found it to be fascinating.
    - It's kind of become my default Gospel, the one I think in its world more often than not because of this class.

### The Gospel of John

- The book sets up in three main parts.
  - o The prologue, which we're looking at today.
  - o The book of signs which goes from the prologue to about chapter 13.
  - o The Book of Glory which takes up the rest of the book with the exception of a brief but meaningful epilogue in chapter 21.
- The book is well-structured and uses decent Greek.
- Likely written by John, son of Zebedee, known in the work as the beloved disciple.
  - o The author certainly had an intimate knowledge of Jewish life, religion and customs.
  - o John's Greek is simpler than Luke's polished, educated style but carries theological weight surpassing the other Gospels.
- The point and purpose of the prologue is to establish Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully God.
  - o It uses language similar to Genesis, that's deliberate, to create a sweeping sense of epic new beginning in Jesus Christ.
  - o In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.
  - o What is the Word?

### Logos

#### - Meaning of "Logos"

##### 1. Greek Definition:

- o *Logos* (Greek: λόγος) means "word," "reason," "discourse," or "principle."
- o In Greek philosophy, *logos* was associated with:

- **Heraclitus (6th century B.C.):** *Logos* as the rational principle governing the universe.
- **Stoicism:** *Logos* as the universal reason or divine rationality that orders creation.
- **Philo of Alexandria (1st century A.D.):** *Logos* as an intermediary between God and the material world, embodying divine reason and wisdom.

## 2. Hebrew and Jewish Background:

- **"Word" (Hebrew: *dabar*):** Represents God's creative and active power (Genesis 1:3, "And God said...").
- **Wisdom Literature:**
  - Proverbs 8:22-31 describes Wisdom as present with God during creation, often seen as a precursor to the *Logos* concept.

## The Logos

- What John's Gospel is doing is making the claim that Jesus is the universal guiding wisdom, the WORD.
  - Luther understood the difference between words and the WORD.
  - Heitlewort and Theitleowort
    - Some words do something.
      - When I declare at the end of a wedding service, that does something.
        - God's Word always does something.
- God's Word, Jesus was active and present at creation, that's what this particular opening means.
- It means that while somethings change, thankfully Jesus stays the same...He is, was and always will be the eternal Word.
- **2. The Logos in John 1:1-14**
- **Preexistence of the Logos (John 1:1-2):** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*
- Echoes Genesis 1:1, connecting the *Logos* to the act of creation.
- *Logos* is eternal, existing before all things.
- Distinct from God (with God) yet fully divine (was God).
- **The Logos as Creator (John 1:3):** *"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made."*
- The *Logos* is the agent of creation, echoing Genesis 1 where God speaks the universe into existence.
- Connects to Colossians 1:16: *"By Him all things were created."*
- **The Logos as Life and Light (John 1:4-5):** *"In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."*
- *Life:* The *Logos* is the source of both physical and eternal life (John 10:10).
- *Light:* Represents revelation, truth, and salvation (Psalm 36:9, *"In Your light, we see light."*).
- The *Logos* overcomes darkness (sin and death), and the darkness cannot extinguish it.
- **The Logos Rejected by the World (John 1:10-11):** *"He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him."*
- The *Logos* enters creation but is not recognized or accepted, highlighting humanity's spiritual blindness.
- **The Logos Incarnated (John 1:14):** *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*
- **Incarnation:** The eternal *Logos* takes on human form, a direct and intimate act of God dwelling among His people.
- **Glorious:** Reveals the divine nature of the *Logos* through His life, teachings, miracles, and ultimately the cross and resurrection.
  - So, the author of John wires the book theologically through the lens of the Word from the get-go.

- As Richard Hays made a big deal out of this, you really are supposed to read this as a new beginning of sorts, one that makes sense of the first one, really.
  - We can only understand God through Jesus Christ.

- And it isn't just that Jesus is the Word, he is also the Light of the Word.

#### Jesus the Light of the World

- I'll never forget going to the world's largest underground lake in Tennessee somewhere.
  - Zero lumens, it was scary.
  - When that light came on, the effect was immediate – gratitude for the light.
- I think this is some of the most hopeful words in the entire New Testament.
  - That Christ's light won't be overcome.
  - We all know what it's like to live in darkness.
    - Finances
    - Health
    - Loved ones
    - These can bring us to the brink of madness sometimes, can't they?
    - What the Bible is telling us is that nothing can overtake the light of Jesus Christ.

#### North Korea

In the deeply repressive and closed-off country of North Korea, where Christianity is illegal, the light of Jesus Christ continues to shine in extraordinary ways. Despite the immense danger of imprisonment, torture, or execution, underground believers in North Korea gather in secret to worship God, often at great personal risk.

- One account tells of a small group of Christians who met at night in a basement, whispering hymns and prayers to avoid detection. They would share pages of the Bible, which had been smuggled into the country, reading by candlelight or the dim glow of a hidden lamp. These believers found hope and courage in the promises of Jesus, clinging to verses like John 8:12: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
- Their light was noticed one day when a neighbor overheard their whispers. Instead of reporting them, the neighbor asked to join, drawn to the hope they carried amidst the darkness of oppression. Over time, the group grew, quietly spreading the gospel.
- Even when some members were arrested, the remaining believers continued to meet, testifying that no amount of persecution could extinguish the light of Jesus in their hearts. They lived as examples of John 1:5: *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*
- This story shows that even in the world's darkest corners, where the name of Jesus is forbidden, His light cannot be extinguished. It burns brighter in the hearts of those who follow Him, offering hope to others and triumphing over the forces of darkness. It's a reminder that the light of Christ is eternal, and as believers, we are called to carry it forward, no matter the cost.
- The light will always defeat the darkness.
  - The second movie in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, just when it looks like they good guys will be defeated, dawn comes and with it, reinforcements and victory.
    - Jesus is like that for us.

#### Point 3: The Word Became Flesh (John 1:10-14)

**Key Idea:** Jesus took on human form to dwell among us and bring grace and truth.

#### Scripture Insight:

- *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).
  - The phrase *"made His dwelling"* literally means "pitched His tent." This recalls God's presence in the tabernacle during Israel's wilderness journey (Exodus 40:34-38). In Jesus, God's presence is not distant but personal and tangible.

- Jesus brought a perfect balance of grace and truth. He didn't shy away from confronting sin, but He always extended love and forgiveness.
- **Philippians 2:6-7:** *"Though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."*

**Theological Insights:**

- Karl Barth emphasized, *"God's coming into human history in Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of His love. He entered our world to redeem it, not condemn it."*
- The incarnation bridges the gap between humanity and God. Jesus is fully God, capable of saving, and fully man, able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).

**Illustration:**

- Imagine a king who leaves his palace, not to visit but to live among his people as one of them. He wears their clothes, shares their struggles, and understands their pain. This is what Jesus did when He became flesh.

**Application:**

- The incarnation shows us the lengths to which God will go to be in relationship with us. He's not a distant deity but a personal Savior.
- Have you allowed His grace and truth to transform you? How does the reality of His nearness shape your daily walk?