

John 1:1 Commentary

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Other Resources on the Introduction to Gospel of John

- [Gospel of John Introduction - John MacArthur- Well Done](#)
- [Gospel of John - J Vernon McGee - Outline, short summary of each chapter](#)
- [Analysis of John - James Van Dine](#)
- [Knowing God Through John - 32 page booklet from Radio Bible Class](#)

OVERVIEW CHARTS — ON GOSPEL OF JOHN

CLICK ON CHARTS TO ENLARGE

This first chart gives us an excellent depiction (almost like a graph) of the upswing in Jesus' popularity in the first 5 chapters and then beginning to decline beginning in John 5 and culminating in the Cross. Below the dark bold line (slightly below center) note the depiction of three (and possibly 4) **Passovers** (Jn 5:1 is simply called "the feast" so we cannot be sure).

The chart below is nice because it shows how John divides Jesus' ministry into public and private sections --(1) **Jesus' public ministry** lasted for about 3 years and is described in John 1-12(2) **Jesus' private ministry** is found in Jn 13-21 (especially Jn 13-17, 20-21) and lasted for a period of days. This chart also summarizes the 7 signs (miracles) in His public ministry (bottom left side of chart) and the **KEY WORDS** (see also list of key words below)

The first three (Synoptic) Gospels focus more on **WHAT** Jesus taught and did but John focuses more on **WHO** Jesus is. John shows us who Jesus is by allowing Jesus to speak for Himself in seven dramatic **I Am** statements, which were not included in the first three gospels. John is a Gospel written for a specific purpose: that we might believe. This chart explains how John's Gospel is different than the Synoptic Gospels.

COMPARISON OF GENERAL EMPHASIS OF TEACHING ON JESUS	
SYNOPTIC GOSPELS MATTHEW-MARK-LUKE	GOSPEL OF JOHN
Focus more on WHAT Jesus taught and did	Focuses more on WHO Jesus is

SHOW US JESUS OUTWARDLY	SHOWS US JESUS INWARDLY
EMPHASIZE JESUS' HUMANITY	EMPHASIZES JESUS' DIVINITY
Focus mainly on our Lord's public discourses	Focus more on His private conversations, His verbal conflicts with Jews, His closer teachings with inner disciples
More Factual	More Doctrinal.
Begin with a human genealogy and fulfillment of Jewish prophecy	Begins with a Divine revelation and eternal existence

COMPARISON OF SYNOPTIC GOSPELS WITH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

	SYNOPTIC GOSPELS	GOSPEL OF JOHN
Portrait of Christ	God-MAN His HUMANITY	GOD-man His DEITY
Perspective	Historical	Spiritual
Beginning	Begin with a human genealogy and fulfillment of Jewish prophecy	Begins with a Divine revelation and eternal existence
Unique Material	Matthew = 42%, Mark = 7%, Luke = 59%	92% Unique Seven "I Am" Statements
Discourse	More Public Focus is on Jesus & the crowds	More Private Focus is on Jesus & individuals
Teaching Emphasis	More on ethical, practical <i>WHAT</i> Jesus Taught	More on Person of Christ <i>WHO</i> Jesus is
Main Geographic Focus of Ministry	Mainly in North around Galilee	Mainly around Jerusalem at time of Feasts
Feasts	Only 1 Passover recorded	Records 3 Passovers
Key Word	Mt = fulfilled Mk = immediately Luke = Son of man	Believe
Key Verse	Mt 21:5: Behold your King Mk 10:45: To serve Lk 19:10 - To Seek & to save	Jn 20:31
Christ Portrayed As	Mt - King Mk - Servant Lk - Son of Man	Son of God
Deity	In general Veil His Deity Until After Calvary	Develops the themes of Jesus as fully God, fully Man

Note John's paucity of miracles compared with the other Gospels. John's purposes is not to show His miracles but to show us His deity (Jn 20:31). This chart could supplement the one above for a quick review to those who have never seen this material. There is more material than you would probably want to show (too much and you lose people) but I think the sections in yellow are useful.

GOSPEL GLIMPSES OF JESUS CHRIST

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Christ Portrayed As	Prophesied King	Obedient Servant	Perfect Man	Son of God
Original Audience	Jews	Romans	Greeks	All Men
Key Word	"Fulfilled"	"Immediately"	"Son of Man"	"Believe"
Key Verse	Mt 21:5	Mk 10:45	Lk 19:10	Jn 20:31
Outstanding Feature	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Allegories
Miracles	20	18	20	8
Tone	Prophetic	Practical	Historical	Spiritual
Percent Spoken By Christ	60%	42%	50%	50%
Old Testament Quotes	53	36	25	20
Old Testament Allusions	76	27	42	105
Unique Material	42%	59%	7%	92%
Main Emphasis About Jesus	Synoptic Gospels (see together) His Humanity			His Deity

What is the single most important question ever asked? The question came from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 16:15 and was addressed to His disciples -- "Who do you say that I am?" **So even as we begin this study of John how would YOU answer the question Who is Jesus?** Would you give the answer that Peter gave in Matthew 16:16 Peter responded answering "You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the Living God." In Mt 16:17 Jesus declared "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven." When we confess Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, we are **blessed** a word which means spiritually prosperous independent of our external circumstances. And how did Peter know Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One for whom the Jews of the first century were looking? Was it because Peter was so wise? No, it is because God opened the eyes of his heart to see and understand spiritual truth (cf John 6:44-45).

WHO IS JESUS?

Ask a conservative, "Was Jesus human or divine?" and he will answer emphatically, "Divine!" (John 1:1)

Ask a liberal the same question and he may reply, "Human." (John 1:14)

Both are right and both are wrong.

Why? Because the correct answer is "Both."

Jesus was both human and divine.

Fully God, Fully Man.

Mystery of mysteries!

So if Jesus ask you "**Who do you say that I am?**" and you are not sure how you would answer, then spend time in John as He reveals His true identity and the Spirit opens your eyes so that you come to **KNOW** Him as LORD. And if you already **KNOW** Jesus as Lord, John's Gospel will help you **GROW** to know Him more intimately than you ever thought possible. Recall from the **CHARTS** that while the 3 Synoptic Gospels (Mt, Mk, Luke, syn-optic ~ "*see together*") focus more on what Jesus taught and did, John's Gospel focuses more on Who Jesus is.

PURPOSE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

Whenever you study a book of the Bible, you want to understand the writer's purpose for writing. In some books this is difficult to discern but not in the Gospel of John. So let's see if we can understand his purpose by reading John 20:30-31 -

Therefore many other **signs (semeion)** Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples (**mathetes**), which are not written in this book but these have been written so that you may **believe (pisteuo)** that Jesus is

the Christ (**Christos**) (Messiah), the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have **life** (**zoe**) in His name (**onoma**)." (Jn 20:30-note, John 20:31-note)

Notice first that John does not call them **miracles** but **signs**. They are of course miracles but John preferred the word **signs**. Why? Think about what a sign does -- it points to something. In this case John says it points to some One! While John acknowledges that he witnessed many signs, under the inspiration of the Spirit, John is led to select only 7 (or 8 if you include the miraculous catch of fish in Jn 21:1-14) of these signs. And this does not count the greatest "sign" of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

So John clearly states his two fold purpose for writing: (1) That you may **believe** Jesus is the Messiah and (2) In believing you might have **life**, real life, vital, exciting, compelling, fulfilling, satisfying life as God intended it now and throughout eternity -- the life that He described in John 10:10 declaring "I came to give life and give it abundantly." Abundant life brings us a new purpose, new values, new relationships, new loves, and a new sense of destiny! **Are you experiencing abundant life? John says one of the purposes of this book is that "believing you may have life in His Name."**

James Montgomery Boice introduces his first lesson on John 1:1-2 with these poignant words - What do you think of Jesus Christ? Who is He? According to Christianity this is the most important question you or anyone else will ever have to face. It is important because it is inescapable—you will have to answer it sooner or later, in this world or in the world to come—and because the quality of your life here and your eternal destiny depend upon your answer. Who is Jesus Christ? If He was only a man, then you can safely forget Him. If he is God, as he claimed to be, and as all Christians believe, then you should yield your life to him. You should worship and serve him faithfully. ([Gospel of John](#))

KEY WORDS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

A **key word** is a word or phrase that functions to unlock the meaning of a text. There are a number of key words in John's Gospel but the most important is **believe** [**pisteuo**]. John used the verb **believe** 98 times which is more than all the uses in the Synoptic Gospels combined. In fact if one does a search for the believe (using the root belie*) in the NASB, there are 292 hits in 266 verses. It is astounding that John's Gospel contains almost 1/3 of all the Biblical occurrences of believe (belief, believes). And so it is not surprising that John's purpose statement in Jn 20:31-note emphasizes that those who **believe** in Jesus will receive life in His Name. Given John's purpose and the predominance of the key word believe, it is not surprising that one often hears the statement (which of course would be difficult to objectively measure) that more souls have believed in Jesus through the reading of the Gospel of John than any other book in the Bible! Perhaps God will clarify this for us when we get to heaven.

Here are the Key Words in the Gospel of John (in the NASB 1995 version) - Note that the approximate number of uses of each word (searched so as to find plural forms, etc) is found in the Gospel of John is in parentheses. I have also included John's **additional** uses in his epistles and in the Revelation for completeness.

Believe (pisteuo)(98x - Note there are 292 hits on "belie*" in the Bible-NASB) -

John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22f; 3:12, 15f, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41f, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46f; 6:29f, 35f, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38f, 48; 8:24, 30f, 45f; 9:18, 35f, 38; 10:25f, 37f, 42; 11:15, 25ff, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:11, 36ff, 42, 44, 46; 13:19; 14:1, 10ff, 29; 16:9, 27, 30f; 17:8, 20f; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 27, 29, 31 (**John's epistle** - 1 John 3:23; 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13)

World (kosmos)(78x in the Gospel of John - Note there are 254 hits of world* in the Bible) -

John 1:9f, 29; 3:16f, 19; 4:42; 6:14, 33, 51; 7:4, 7; 8:12, 23, 26; 9:5, 39; 10:36; 11:9, 27; 12:19, 25, 31, 46f; 13:1; 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 30f; 15:18f; 16:8, 11, 20f, 28, 33; 17:5f, 9, 11, 13ff, 18, 21, 23ff; 18:20, 36f; 21:25; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:2, 15ff; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3ff, 9, 14, 17; 5:4f, 19; 2 John 1:7; Jude 1:19; Rev 3:10; 11:15; 12:9; 13:8; 16:14; 17:8)

Love (agapao) (40x in the Gospel of John)

John 3:16, 19, 35; 8:42; 10:17; 11:5; 12:43; 13:1, 23, 34; 14:15, 21, 23f, 28, 31; 15:9, 12, 17; 17:23f, 26; 19:26; 21:7, 15f, 20; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:10, 15; 3:10f, 14, 18, 23; 4:7f, 10ff, 19ff; 5:1f; 2 John 1:1, 5; 3 John 1:1; Rev 1:5; 3:9; 12:11; 20:9)

Love (agape) (7x in the Gospel of John) -

John 5:42; 13:35; 15:9f, 13; 17:26; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:5, 15; 3:1, 16f; 4:7ff, 12, 16ff; 5:3; 2 John 1:3, 6; 3 John 1:6; Rev 2:4, 19)

Know (131x in the Gospel of John) - two "types" of knowledge (see Greek words below)

57x in the Gospel of John = Ginosko - John 1:10, 48; 2:24f; 3:10; 4:1, 53; 5:6, 42; 6:15, 69; 7:17, 26f, 49,

51; 8:27f, 32, 43, 52, 55; 10:6, 14f, 27, 38; 11:57; 12:9, 16; 13:7, 12, 28, 35; 14:7, 9, 17, 20, 31; 15:18; 16:3, 19; 17:3, 7f, 23, 25; 19:4; 21:17; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:3ff, 13f, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 16, 19f, 24; 4:2, 6ff, 13, 16; 5:2, 20; 2 John 1:1; Rev 2:23f; 3:3, 9)

84x in the Gospel of John = Eido - John 1:26, 31, 33; 2:9; 3:2, 8, 11; 4:10, 22, 25, 32, 42; 5:13, 32; 6:6, 42, 61, 64; 7:15, 27ff; 8:14, 19, 37, 55; 9:12, 20f, 24f, 29ff; 10:4f; 11:22, 24, 42, 49; 12:35, 50; 13:1, 3, 7, 11, 17f; 14:4f; 15:15, 21; 16:18, 30; 18:2, 4, 21; 19:10, 28, 35; 20:2, 9, 13f; 21:4, 12, 15ff, 24; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:11, 20f, 29; 3:2, 5, 14f; 5:13, 15, 18ff; 3 John 1:12; Rev 2:2, 9, 13, 17, 19; 3:1, 8, 15, 17; 7:14; 12:12; 19:12)

Truly (Amen) (50x in the Gospel of John) Note every one of John's uses is "**Truly, truly**"

John 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24f; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20f, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18; (**Revelation** = Rev 1:6f; 3:14; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 22:20)

Word (Logos) (45x in the Gospel of John)

John 1:1, 14; 2:22; 4:37, 39, 41, 50; 5:24, 38; 6:60; 7:36, 40; 8:31, 37, 43, 51f, 55; 10:19, 35; 12:38, 48; 14:23f; 15:3, 20, 25; 17:6, 14, 17, 20; 18:9, 32; 19:8, 13; 21:23; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 1:1, 10; 2:5, 7, 14; 3:18; 3 John 1:10; Rev 1:2f, 9; 3:8, 10; 6:9; 12:11; 17:17; 19:9, 13; 20:4; 21:5; 22:6f, 9f, 18f)

Life (zoe) (47x in the Gospel of John)

John 1:4; 3:15f, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 29, 39f; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47f, 51, 53f, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2f; 20:31; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 1:1f; 2:25; 3:14f; 5:11ff, 16, 20; Rev 2:7, 10; 3:5; 7:17; 11:11; 13:8; 16:3; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:6, 27; 22:1f, 14, 17, 19)

Truth or true (49x in the Gospel of John)

Truth (aletheia) (35x in the Gospel of John)

John 1:14, 17; 3:21; 4:23f; 5:33; 8:32, 40, 44ff; 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:7, 13; 17:17, 19; 18:37f; 1 John 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21; 3:18f; 4:6; 5:6; 2 John 1:1ff; 3 John 1:1, 3f, 8, 12

True (alethes) (14x in the Gospel of John)

John 3:33; 4:18; 5:31f; 6:55; 7:18; 8:13f, 17, 26; 10:41; 19:35; 21:24; (**John's epistles** = 1 John 2:8, 27; 3 John 1:12)

Judge or judgment (30x in the Gospel of John)

Judge (krino) (19x) - John 3:17f; 5:22, 30; 7:24, 51; 8:15f, 26, 50; 12:47f; 16:11; 18:31 (**Revelation** = Rev 6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:8, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:12f)

Judgment (krisis) (11x)

John 3:19; 5:22, 24, 27, 29f; 7:24; 8:16; 12:31; 16:8, 11; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 4:17; Rev 14:7; 16:7; 18:10; 19:2)

Witness, Be a Witness (47x in the Gospel of John)

Marturia (14x) - John 1:7, 19; 3:11, 32f; 5:31f, 34, 36; 8:13f, 17; 19:35; 21:24; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 5:9ff; 3 John 1:12; Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4)

Martureo (33x) - John 1:7f, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31ff, 36f, 39; 7:7; 8:13f, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26f; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 1:2; 4:14; 5:6f, 9f; 3 John 1:3, 6, 12; Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20)

Ask (31x in the Gospel of John)

John 1:19, 21, 25; 4:9f, 40; 5:12; 8:7; 9:2, 15, 21, 23; 11:22; 12:21; 14:13f, 16; 15:7, 16; 16:5, 23f, 26; 17:9, 15, 20; 18:7; 19:31, 38

Name (25x in the Gospel of John)

Onoma - John 1:6, 12; 2:23; 3:1, 18; 5:43; 10:3, 25; 12:13, 28; 14:13f, 26; 15:16, 21; 16:23f, 26; 17:6, 11f, 26; 18:10; 20:31; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 2:12; 3:23; 5:13; 3 John 1:7; Rev 2:3, 13, 17; 3:1, 4f,

8, 12; 6:8; 8:11; 9:11; 11:13, 18; 13:1, 6, 8, 17; 14:1, 11; 15:2, 4; 16:9; 17:3, 5, 8; 19:12f, 16; 21:12, 14; 22:4)

Light (22x in the Gospel of John)

Phos - John 1:4f, 7ff; 3:19ff; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9f; 12:35f, 46; (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 1:5, 7; 2:8ff; Rev 18:23; 21:24; 22:5)

Comment: Did you notice that Light is not found after Jn 12:46. This marks the end of Jesus' public ministry! The nation of Israel had an opportunity to receive the Light but for the most part refused it and it was removed!

My Father (21x in the Gospel of John)

Pater - John 5:17; 6:32, 40; 8:19, 38, 49, 54; 10:18, 29, 37; 14:7, 20f, 23; 15:1, 8, 15, 23f; 20:17

Glory, glorify (40x in the Gospel of John)

Doxa (17x) - John 1:14; 2:11; 5:41, 44; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:41; 17:5, 22, 24; (**John's uses in Revelation** = Rev 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12f; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 18:1; 19:1, 7; 21:11, 23f, 26)

Doxazo (23x) - John 7:39; 8:54; 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31f; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4f, 10; 21:19; (**John's uses in Revelation** = Rev 15:4; 18:7)

Abide (13x in the Gospel of John)

Meno - John 3:36; 5:38; 6:56; 14:10, 17, 25; 15:4ff, 9f; (**John's epistles** = 1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 24, 27f; 3:6, 9, 14f, 17, 24; 4:12f, 15f; 2 John 1:2, 9)

Darkness or dark (9x in the Gospel of John)

Skotia, skotos - John 1:5 (2x); Jn 3:19; 6:17; 8:12; 12:35 (2x), Jn 12:46; 20:1 (**John's epistles and Revelation** = 1 John 1:5f; 2:8f, 11; Rev 8:12; 9:2; 16:10) Compared John 13:30 when Judas deserted Jesus and went out, John adding "and it was night!"

SIMPLE BUT PROFOUND

As you study John's Gospel remember that on one hand it is the simplest Greek of all the Gospels but on the other hand the truths unveiled are some of the most profound ever penned.

While the Greek used in this Gospel is relatively simply and non-technical, the truths that are revealed are profound and call for a clean heart (confess your sins), a prayerful attitude (seeking to really know God, not just about Him) and continual dependence on the Holy Spirit (to teach you spiritual truths).

Erdman on the profundity of John - Its stories are so simple that even a child will love them, but its statements are so profound that no philosopher can fathom them.

John MacArthur adds that this "opening section of John's gospel expresses the most profound truth in the universe in the clearest terms. Though easily understood by a child, John's Spirit-inspired words convey a truth beyond the ability of the greatest minds in human history to fathom: the eternal, infinite God became a man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The glorious, incontrovertible truth that in Jesus the divine "Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14) is the theme of John's gospel." ([John 1-11 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Sidlow Baxter on the Gospel of John - Is there anywhere a more exquisite compound of infinite profundity and lingual simplicity? Was there ever a sublimer subject more ingenuously interpreted? But its priceless preciousness, of course, lies in its Divine revealings and spiritual values. Gleaming over its portal is the inscription: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (Jn 1:18) The Greek verb-form here translated as "declared" is exegesato (**exegeomai**), from which comes our English word "exegesis." It means that in the visible Jesus the invisible God is brought forth to view. The incomprehensible concept, "GOD," is objectively elucidated before us. The very heart of the Eternal is livingly "exegeted," for the only begotten Son comes even from "the bosom of the Father." ([Explore the Book](#))

Rob Salvato - Misconception : The gospel of John is for New believers

A) Now is True that Most Churches do recommend John – to New believers – Why is that ? Two reasons

1) Of all the gospels John's was written to solidify our faith.

2) So they just keep reading right thru the NT

B) But John is anything but easy: John was a bit of a mystic – his writing style is sometimes in the abstract

1) He says something and you have to look at it 2 or 3 times to catch the full impact of what is being said. - I like what Alan Redpath says about this Book, "he says that the Gospel of John is shallow enough for a child to wade in, and deep enough for an elephant to swim in."

C) Interesting to note that John only uses about 600 words in his vocabulary.

1) Which is the Vocabulary of a seven or eight year old

D) They say that you can learn about 100 words per year those first few years. Only 600 words

He is the simplest in regards to Vocabulary – but he is the most sublime in regards to truth.

A) The early Church Fathers considered John – not Paul the great theologian of their day – because of his ability to communicate truth

B) There is more theology in the Gospel of John than there is in any other Gospel. [Sermon](#))

James Montgomery Boice - The Gospel of John has blessed the hearts of God's people through the centuries. It has been called "God's love letter to the world." Luther wrote of it, "This is the unique, tender, genuine chief Gospel. ...Should a tyrant succeed in destroying the Holy Scriptures and only a single copy of the Epistle to the Romans and the Gospel according to John escape him, Christianity would be saved." Luther must have especially loved the Gospel because he preached on it for many years from the pulpit of the parish church of Wittenberg... It has probably been the means by which more persons have come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord than any other single portion of Scripture. ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#))

A. T. Robertson calls the Gospel according to John the "most wonderful of all books."

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be,
Some day your heart will be asking,
"What will he do with me?"

Henrietta Mears summarizes some of the interesting features of John...

No genealogy is recorded—neither His legal lineage through Joseph (as given by Matthew), nor His personal descent through Mary (as given by Luke).

No account of His birth—because He was "in the beginning."

Nothing about His boyhood.

Nothing about His temptation. Jesus rather is presented as Christ the Lord, not the One tempted in all points just as we are.

No transfiguration.

No appointing of His disciples.

No parables.

No account of the Ascension.

No Great Commission.

Yet only here is He called "the Word"

The Creator

The only begotten of the Father

The Lamb of God

The revelation of the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14) ([What the Bible is All About](#))

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: THE BEST "GOSPEL TRACT"

The Gospel of John is like a "big" gospel tract and has in fact probably been handed out "evangelistically" as a "Gospel tract" to

more people than any other book of the Bible. Many writers have made the statement that more souls have come into the Kingdom of Heaven as a result of reading the Gospel of John than any other book. The purpose of John is clearly stated in John 20:31 where twice John mentions "**believe**." He first wants every reader to be absolutely convinced that the Man Jesus is not just any man but is in fact God, the Messiah, the Son of God. Notice that he does not say "I have written this down so you may have Jesus in your heart, but that you may believe in the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah. His second use of "**believe**" is that in acknowledging Him as true God (believing in the historicity, the identity and provision of this Jesus), we receive Him truly as our Savior and might receive the gift of eternal life found only in Jesus (in "His Name"). John is seeking to secure converts. Given this evangelistic purpose, someone who is already a believer might ask why they would need to read the Gospel -- "*I believe He is God and I believe He died on the Cross that I might have life in Him.*" Remember that the Gospel of John which gives us the most glorious portrayal of Jesus as God of any book in the Bible. In light of that truth in Second Corinthians Paul gives us a reason a believer should never grow tired of reading John...

"But we all, with unveiled (anakalupto) face beholding as in a mirror (katoptrizomai) the glory ((doxa) of the Lord, are being transformed (metamorphoo in the present tense = ongoing, all our life, progressive sanctification) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit!" (2Cor 3:18-see comments)

James refers to the Scripture using the metaphor of a mirror (James 1:22-24-note) and that certainly would apply to this passage. So how do we behold "**as in a mirror the glory of the Lord**"? In a word, we read the Word, and as we read (the Gospel of John) we read one of the most "glorious" descriptions ever penned of Jesus as God ("*beholding... the glory of the Lord*"). Assuming that we read with humble, teachable, prayerful, obedient (doers not just hearers) hearts, Paul says that the supernatural result will be that the Holy Spirit takes the Word we read and transforms us into the image of the Son of God, from glory to glory! That's why a believer reads the Gospel of John. **Application: Instead of watching a Netflix movie tonight, why don't you set aside a couple of uninterrupted hours and ask God's Spirit to unveil the words of this Gospel as you read through it in one sitting (or two sittings over successive nights). A good movie might have given you temporal joy, but a good book (John) will give you eternal transformation!**

James Montgomery Boice referencing John's purpose in Jn 20:31 - There are always people who will say that **faith** is something that must be entirely divorced from evidence. But that is not stated in the Bible. **Faith** is believing in something or someone **on the basis of evidence** and then acting upon it. In this case, John has provided evidence for the full deity of Jesus so that readers, whether in his age or ours, might believe it and commit their lives to Jesus as their Savior... Sometime ago I was talking to a young man who was very critical of Christianity.

"Have you investigated the evidence?" I asked him.

"What do you mean? How does one do that?" he asked.

"Go home this week and begin to read John's Gospel," I answered. "But before you begin, take a moment to pray something like this: '*God, I do not know if you exist or, if you do, whether you hear me. But if you exist and if you hear me, I want you to know that I am an honest seeker after truth. If this Book of John can really speak to me and show me that Jesus is the Son of God and is God, I ask you to prove that to me while I read it. And if you prove it, then I will believe in him and serve him forever.*' " I told him that if he did that, God would speak to him and that he would be convinced that all the things that are written about Jesus of Nazareth in this book are true and that he is the Son of God and our Savior.

The young man went home. I saw him a week later, and I asked, "Did you read the book?"

He answered, "Well, I have to admit that there are other things to which I give a higher priority."

Here is another case. A Christian at the University of Pennsylvania entered into a series of Bible studies in John's Gospel with a young woman who was not a Christian. The two young women went through several chapters where Jesus is declared many times to be God, but none of it clicked with the non-Christian. Suddenly, in the midst of a study of the third chapter of John, and after many weeks of study, the inquiring non-Christian exclaimed, "Why, I see it! Jesus Christ is God! He is God." That was the turning point, and several weeks later she became a Christian. ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#))

Mears adds these features regarding Jesus' Deity Revealed

- In every chapter we see Jesus' deity:
- In Nathanael's confession, "You are the Son of God"—John 1:49
- In the miracle of Cana, He "thus revealed his glory"—John 2:11
- In His word to Nicodemus, He said He was "his one and only Son" (the "only begotten Son," KJV)—John 3:16
- In His conversation with the woman of Samaria He stated: "I who speak to you am he" [the Messiah]—John 4:26

- To the impotent man, He disclosed that "the voice of the Son of God" will call the dead to life—John 5:25
- In the bread chapter, He admits that "I am the bread of life"—John 6:35
- In the water of life chapter He proclaims, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink"—John 7:37
- To the unbelieving Jews He disclosed, "Before Abraham was born, I am!"—John 8:58
- The blind man was told, "You have now seen [the Son of Man]; in fact, he is the one speaking with you"; Jesus' unique claim to being the Son of God—John 9:37
- Jesus stated, "I and the Father are one"—John 10:30
- Martha's declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of God"—John 11:27
- To the Greeks, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself"—John 12:32
- At the supper He said, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am"—John 13:13
- In His statement, "Trust in God; trust also in me"—John 14:1
- Likening us to branches on a vine He says, "Apart from me you can do nothing"—John 15:5
- In promising the Holy Spirit He says, "I will send him to you"—John 16:7
- In this prayer chapter He says, "Glorify your Son"—John 17:1
- In His trial He states, "You are right in saying I am a king"—John 18:37
- In His atonement He had the right to say, "It is finished"—John 19:30
- In his confession Thomas the doubter exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"—John 20:28
- In demanding obedience, "You must follow me"—John 21:22.

Irving Jensen writes that the **Gospel of John** "is often the first New Testament book recommended to new Christians for study. That is because it has a combination of many desirable features that make it a primer for reading and study: it clearly presents foundational truths; it combines fact and interpretation; it presents the way of salvation succinctly and persuasively (e.g., Jn 3:16); its very setting and atmosphere are universal; and it is picturesque and attractive in varied forms. Some of those qualities will become evident as you survey this fascinating portion of Scripture." ([Jensen's Survey of the New Testament](#))

I like **Barry Horner's** alliterated outline of John ([Horner](#))

1. The Prologue Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 1:1-18.

- The Eternal Word and his relationship to God, Jn 1:1-2.
- The Eternal Word and his relationship to creation, Jn 1:3-5.
- The Eternal Word and his relationship to John the Baptist, Jn 1:6-8.
- The Eternal Word and his relationship to man, Jn 1:9-13.
- The Eternal Word and his relationship to grace, Jn 1:14-18.

2. The Preparatory Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 1:19-51.

- The testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus Christ, Jn 1:19-34.
- The testimony of the first disciples to Jesus Christ, Jn 1:35-51.

3. The Public Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 2:1-12:50.

- Sign one – the glory of Christ displayed at Cana, Jn 2:1-12.
- The glory of Christ prefigured by the temple, Jn 2:13-22.
- The new birth discourse, Jn 3:1-21.
- The testimony of the Bridegroom's friend, Jn 3:22-36.
- The great Samaritan awakening, Jn 4:1-42.
- Sign two – Christ heals the nobleman's son, Jn 4:43-54.
- Sign three – Christ heals a lame man on the Sabbath, Jn 5:1-18.
- The witness of Christ's relationship with his Father, Jn 5:19-47.
- Sign four – Christ feeds the hungry multitude, Jn 6:1-15.
- Sign five – Christ walks on the sea of Galilee, Jn 6:16-21.
- The bread of life discourse, Jn 6:22-71.
- The Feast of Tabernacles testimonies, Jn 7:1-8:59.
- Sign six – Christ heals the man born blind, Jn 9:1-41.
- The Good Shepherd discourse, Jn 10:1-42.
- Sign seven – Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, Jn 11:1-57.
- The closing ministry of Christ to a dark world, Jn 12:1-50.

4. The Private Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 13:1-17:26.

- Jesus discourses on his impending departure from the disciples, Jn 13:1-38.
- Jesus discourses on his impending departure to the Father, Jn 14:1-31.
- Jesus discourses on future discipleship, Jn 15:1-16:33.
- Jesus discourses through prayer on glorification, Jn 17:1-26.

5. The Passion Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 18:1-19:42.

- The prelude to the cross, Jn 18:1-40.
- The sacrifice of the cross, Jn 19:1-42.

6. The Perfected Ministry of Jesus Christ, Jn 20:1-21:45.

- The resurrection, Jn 20:1-31.
- The reappearance, Jn 21:1-25.

Horner in his introduction writes -

"When Christian evangelism is undertaken it is common for precedence to be given to the proclamation of the Gospel of John, and the reason for this emphasis is not difficult to discern. There is something very distinct here in comparison with the Synoptic Gospels and probably it is the fact that John, while incorporating historic narrative, gives greater emphasis to the presentation of gospel truth in a way that constantly causes the reader to be confronted, in a most dominant manner, with the divine person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the style of John has an engaging simplicity about it that leads to the subsequent and surprising realization that we are quickly transported from seeming shallows to depths that the Synoptics do not fathom. At this point the simplicity of the Greek language, so familiar to beginners of the Koine dialect, only adds to further misapprehension, whereas Leon Morris aptly declares: "I like the comparison of John's Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim... There are unplumbed depths in the limpid clarity of this writing." WHY STUDY THE GOSPEL OF JOHN? Because in its profound simplicity the person of Jesus Christ is set forth in such an arresting and forthright manner that the honest reader is certainly not given the latitude for indecision. If Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the supreme record of biblical soteriology, then The Gospel of John is the supreme record of biblical Christology. Granted that Jesus Christ has unique preeminence in the Word of God as a whole, then The Gospel of John provides us with sharper focus on this glorious incarnation than any other book of the Bible. But further, there is something very captivating about this distinctive record which John, in the purpose statement of John 20:30-31, indicates is decidedly intentional. A. B. Simpson has expressed this captivating element in the chorus of a hymn (see below)... While his humanity is plainly stated (John 1:14; 20:27), yet it is his deity that receives emphatic focus as does no other book in the Bible... It is a misunderstanding to simply regard the Gospel of John as an evangelistic tract for the reason that Jn 13:1-17:26 is clearly a substantial section that addresses only believers and their call to discipleship (**Ed**: And progressive sanctification). Furthermore, the purpose statement of Jn 20:30-31 indicates John's desire that the believer "may be having [present tense] life in His name." ([Horner](#))

Bob Utley Outlines John based on different attributes...

A. A philosophical/theological **Prologue** (Jn 1:1-18) and a practical **Epilogue** (Jn 21)

B. Seven miracle signs during Jesus' public ministry (Jn 2-12) and their interpretation:

1. changing water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (Jn 2:1-11)
2. healing the son of the officer of the court at Capernaum (Jn 4:46-54)
3. healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (Jn 5:1-18)
4. feeding of about 5,000 in Galilee (Jn 6:1-15)
5. walking on the Sea of Galilee (Jn 6:16-21)
6. healing of the man born blind in Jerusalem (Jn 9:1-41)
7. raising of Lazarus in Bethany (Jn 11:1-57)

C. Interviews and dialogue with individuals

1. John the Baptist (Jn 1:19–34; 3:22–36)
2. disciples
 - a. Andrew and Peter (Jn 1:35–42)
 - b. Philip and Nathanael (Jn 1:43–51)
3. Nicodemus (Jn 3:1–21)
4. woman of Samaria (Jn 4:1–45)
5. Jews in Jerusalem (Jn 5:10–47)
6. crowd in Galilee (Jn 6:22–66)
7. Peter and disciples (Jn 6:67–71)
8. Jesus' brothers (Jn 7:1–13)
9. Jews in Jerusalem (Jn 7:14–8:59; 10:1–42)
10. disciples in upper room (Jn 13:1–17:26)
11. Jewish arrest and trial (Jn 18:1–27)
12. Roman trial (Jn 18:28–19:16)
13. post-resurrection conversations, Jn 20:11–29
 - a. with Mary
 - b. with the ten Apostles
 - c. with Thomas
14. epilogue dialogue with Peter, Jn 21:1–25
15. (Jn 7:53–8:11, the story of the adulterous woman, was not originally part of John's Gospel!)

D. Certain worship/feast days

1. the Sabbaths (Jn 5:9; 7:22; 9:14; 19:31)
2. the Passovers (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; 18:28)
3. the feast of Tabernacles (Jn 8–9)
4. Hanukkah (Jn festival of lights, cf. Jn 10:22)

E. Use of "I Am" statements

1. "I am 'He' " (Jn 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 54–59; 13:19; 18:5–6, 8)
2. "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
3. "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12; 9:5)
4. "I am the door of the sheepfold" (Jn 10:7, 9)
5. "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11, 14)
6. "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25)
7. "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6)
8. "I am the true vine" (Jn 15:1, 5)

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Some day your heart will be asking,
"What will He do with me?"

AUTHOR OF

JOHN

Who wrote this Gospel remembering that the title "Gospel of John" was not part of the inspired text? The traditional view is that John the disciple of Jesus and later His apostle was the author, however no where is the author specifically mentioned by name. In John 21:20-24 we get a clue as to the identity...

Peter, turning around, saw **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following [them;] the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what [is that] to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but [only,] "If I want him to remain until I come, what [is that] to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Horner adds that the author "is a Jew, who is familiar with Hebrew, an apostolic eyewitness, John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24-25. He is the "disciple whom Jesus loved," Jn 21:20, 24. Thus he is, as the traditional view has rightly attested for over 1800 years according to weighty evidence, John the Apostle, a former Galilean fisherman, the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19; 3:16-17), a disciple of the Baptist and later of Jesus as the Christ. Further, this same tradition asserts that John wrote his gospel account at Ephesus where he was a senior bishop/elder until an extremely old age extending to the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, 98-117 A.D." ([Horner](#))

SEVEN "I AM" & SEVEN SIGNS OF HIS DEITY

One striking feature of John are the **seven "I Am" statements** none of which are found in the Synoptic Gospels (in fact **92% of John** is unique material not found in the Synoptic Gospels!). Note Jesus' repeated use of metaphors - Bread, Light, Door, Good Shepherd, Resurrection and Life, Way, Truth and Life, and Vine.

John 6:35; Jesus said to them, **1 am the bread of life**; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. - **The Son has the resources to meet all of man's needs.**

John 8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, **1 am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." - **The Son has the power to overcome the darkness of sin in our life.**

John 10:7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door of the sheep.** John 10:9 **1 am the door**; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. - **The Son by virtue of His sinless life and sacrificial death is literally the only way through which man can enter the Kingdom of God.**

John 10:11 **1 am the good shepherd**; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. John 10:14 **1 am the good shepherd**, and I know My own and My own know Me - **The Son is our Divine Shepherd whose infinite resources meet all of our needs for guidance, care and protection.**

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, **1 am the resurrection and the life**; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies. **The Son of God has the power to raise the dead from the grave**

John 14:6 Jesus *said to him, **1 am the way, and the truth, and the life**; no one comes to the Father but through Me. **Only the Son can bring us into the presence of His Father, can counter the lies of Satan with the Truth and can give us eternal life.**

John 15:1 **1 am the true vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser. John 15:5 **1 am the vine**, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **The Son (via His Spirit) is the sole supernatural source that enables His followers to be spiritually productive.**

SEVEN SIGNS

The Signs of Jesus in John (all except #4 and #5 are unique to John.) Note that John never uses the word **miracle** and in fact has no uses of the word **dunamis**). Instead John uses the word **semeion** (in the plural) which means **signs**. (cf Jn 20:30). Notice that 7 signs occur in the first 12 chapters, the time of His public ministry. John was inspired to choose these 7 to clearly show that the Man Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. It is sad to read of the response of most of the Jews to Jesus' seven clear signs of His power and authority and ultimately His divinity, for John records "though He had performed so many signs before them (remember John only records 7, but undoubtedly there were many more signs that were not recorded - cp Jn 21:25), yet they were

not believing in Him." (John 12:37)

1. The turning of the water into wine (Jn 2:1-11).
2. The healing of the nobleman's son (Jn 4:46-54).
3. The curing of the Bethesda paralytic (Jn 5:1-15).
4. The feeding of the five thousand (Jn 6).
5. The walking over the sea of Galilee (Jn 6).
6. The giving of sight to the blind man (Jn 9:1-7).
7. The raising of Lazarus from death (Jn 11:1-44).
8. The miraculous draught of fishes (Jn 21:1-14).

John does not begin his Gospel with Jesus' birth or a list of Jesus' ancestors. God has no beginning. John began with a ringing declaration "In the beginning was the Word!" As the Word, Jesus was the tangible expression of all that God is. Just as we explain our thoughts and feelings through **words**, the character and majesty of God were fully expressed in God's living Word, Jesus and this is John's major objective.. Jesus became human (John 1:14), but never ceased to be God. John emphasizes this crucial doctrine throughout this Gospel. The upshot is that if you want to see the invisible God, look at Jesus. And if you want to hear God, listen to the words of Jesus.

John is clearly the most intimate with Jesus of all the disciples and repeatedly describes himself as the disciple **Jesus loved** (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

Sidlow Baxter makes the interesting observation that "Most of what John has recorded is omitted by the other three. Moreover, it throws a flood of light on them. For instance, when the synoptists tell of our Lord's "Follow Me" to Peter and Andrew, James and John, it would almost seem as though He had not met them before, which makes their immediate abandonment of all else to follow Him so surprising as to seem almost artificial; but in this fourth Gospel we find that they had not only met Jesus earlier, at John the Baptist's gatherings along the winding Jordan valley, but had companied with Him both in Judaea and in Galilee (Jn 1:40,42,43,47). Before ever He started His preaching itineraries in Galilee there was a group called "His disciples" (Jn 2:2,11), which certainly included Andrew, Peter, James, John, and others of those who later comprised the Apostolate. His seashore "Follow Me," recorded by the synoptists, came later, and was a **call to full-time service** with Him. (Explore the Book)

Scofield agrees commenting on Mt 4:19-21 that "Peter and Andrew were already disciples (John 1:35 - 42). This is a **call to service.**"

J D Watson - People call Jesus "a good man," "a wise teacher," "a moral example," and other such platitudes, but flatly reject Him as God. At the core of several cults is the denial of the deity of Christ, but this truth is an absolutely cardinal doctrine of Christianity; without it, Christianity collapses of its own weight. It's also a doctrine that is clearly taught in Scripture with no ambiguity whatsoever. As John declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made 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... No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:1, 14, 18). (A Word For the Day)

JOHN'S PROLOGUE

JOHN 1:1-18

The Prologue - Virtually every commentary identifies John 1:1-18 as his **prologue**. **Prologue** is derived from the Greek word **prologos** (**pro** = before, beforehand + **logos** = word, speech, discourse) and in ancient Greece described the preface in a play which preceded the entry of the main chorus. Webster's 1828 defines **prologue** as "The preface or introduction to a discourse or performance, chiefly the discourse or poem spoken before a dramatic performance or play begins." Collins English Dictionary says in early opera **prologue** was "an introductory scene in which a narrator summarizes the main action of the work." The Pocket Dictionary for the Study of NT Greek says **prologue** is "A precursory section of a literary work, often introducing motifs and salient features." **D A Carson** describes John's **Prologue** as a foyer to John's Gospel. **Steven Cole** describes it as if one is entering a movie theater and sees the billboards highlighting scenes of the movie you are going to be seeing. **J. A. T. Robinson** observes that "the themes of the gospel are played over beforehand, as in the overture to an opera." **Beasley-Murray** calls the **Prologue** "an anticipatory description of the Mission of the Logos-Son to the World." The **Prologue** has also been referred to as the "proleptic quintessence" (Harnack), a "microcosm" (Valentine), and an "adumbration" (Booser) of the entire Gospel.

Ray Stedman - In the Prologue to the Gospel of John, the apostle is setting forth a summary of who Jesus really is. Last week we

looked at who Jesus is eternally, and why the world cannot forget him. Here is a quotation from a very well known personality, who found he could not forget Jesus: *"I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a mere man. Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. One can absolutely find nowhere but in him alone the imitation or the example of his life. I search in vain in history to find a similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary."* Those words were spoken by Napoleon Bonaparte during a conversation with one of his generals while he was in exile on St. Helena. There are on record other remarkable things that Napoleon said about Christ. It is almost certain that he became a Christian during his days of exile. ([Hello Darkness - John 1:5-13](#))

Bob Utley - A **philosophical/theological Prologue** (Jn 1:1–18) and a **practical Epilogue** (Jn 21:1-25)

John Phillips - John's gospel begins with a prologue (Jn 1:1-18), runs through a threefold view of the Lord Jesus—the signs (Jn 1:19-12:50), the secrets (Jn 13:1-17:26), and the sorrows (Jn 18:1-20:31) of God's Son—and ends with an epilogue (Jn 21:1-25). The basic structure is simple, but John surprises us. He says the simplest things, uses the simplest words, puts together the simplest phrases and sentences—and at once plunges us into mysterious, mystical, mind-staggering concepts. (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

D A Carson writes that John's **Prologue** "summarizes how the **Word**' which was with God in the very beginning came into the sphere of time, history, tangibility—in other words, how the Son of God was sent into the world to become the Jesus of history, so that the glory and grace of God might be uniquely and perfectly disclosed. **The rest of the book is nothing other than an expansion of this theme.** ([The Gospel according to John -The Pillar New Testament Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

Herbert Lockyer...The full prologue takes in John 1:1-18, in which we have—

- Christ in Relation to God (John 1:1, 2, 14, 18).
- Christ in Relation to the Material Universe (John 1:3).
- Christ in Relation to Human Nature (John 1:14).
- Christ in Relation to Humanity (John 1:4, 6-9, 12, 15).
- Christ in Relation to the Old Testament (John 1:17).

John Phillips - The prologue can be divided into three parts, revolving around three of John's favorite words. We have the divine life in essence (Jn 1:1-5), the divine light in evidence (Jn 1:6-13), and the divine love in experience (Jn 1:14-18). (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

John Phillips outline of the Prologue John 1:1-18

I. The Divine Life in **Essence** (Jn 1:1-5)

A. The Lord's Ineffable Person (Jn 1:1-2)

1. Jesus Is Eternally God (Jn 1:1a)
2. Jesus Is Equally God (1:1b)
3. Jesus Is Essentially God (Jn 1:1c-2)

B. The Lord's Infinite Power (Jn 1:3-5)

1. His Power of Creation (Jn 1:3)
2. His Power of Communication (Jn 1:4-5)

II. The Divine Light in **Evidence** (Jn Jn 1:6-13)

A. The Witness and the Light (Jn 1:6-8)

1. The Messenger (Jn 1:6)
2. The Motive (Jn 1:7)
3. The Method (Jn 1:8)

B. The World and the Light (Jn 1:9-13)

1. The Light Revealed (Jn 1:9)

2. The Light Resisted (Jn 1:10-11)

3. The Light Received (Jn 1:12-13)

III. The Divine Love in **Experience** (Jn Jn 1:14-18)

A. Incarnation (Jn 1:14)

B. Identification (Jn 1:15)

1. His Person (Jn 1:15a)

2. His Pre-Eminence (Jn 1:15b)

3. His Pre-Existence (Jn 1:15c)

C. Imputation (Jn 1:16)

D. Implementation (Jn 1:17)

E. Illumination (Jn 1:18)

C H Dodd - "We may regard the Prologue as giving, in the barest skeleton outline, a philosophy of life, or Weltanschauung, which is to be filled in with concrete detail out of the gospel as a whole."

MacLeod on the Prologue - An **overture** in an orchestral composition often forms the prelude to an oratorio or opera. In it the composer introduces the principal themes or motifs that he will develop throughout the work. Many students of John have likened his prologue to an **overture** in which he touched on major themes that he developed later in the Gospel. ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

David J MacLeod points out that "Important themes in the **prologue** that are developed later in the Gospel include life (Jn 1:4), light and darkness (Jn 1:5, 7–9), witness (Jn 1:7–8, 15), world (Jn 1:10), belief and unbelief (Jn 1:11–12), glory (Jn 1:14), and grace and truth (Jn 1:14, 17)."... The history of philosophy and theology is the history of worldviews, in which people take some aspect of reality as they see it and deify it (the religious approach) or make it the cardinal point of an interpretive principle (the philosophical approach). John wrote his Gospel when many such worldviews were prevalent. **Today, as well, a wide variety of worldviews exist, and John's prologue is an antidote to all of them. The Gospel of John presents a true understanding of who Jesus Christ is, so that readers may have the proper framework with which to interpret life and reality—that they may know God and walk in the light of His truth...** In his prologue John began with a clear allusion to Genesis 1. "In the beginning" corresponds to אֶת־בְּרֵאשִׁית ("In the beginning") of Genesis 1:1. John referred to the Word, who was in existence at the time of Creation. John did not refer to Him as "Messiah," "Son of Man," or even "Son of God."²⁰ Instead, in seeking to draw his readers, both Gentiles and Jews, to faith in Christ, he began with a term that would spark their interest. "Word" is an inadequate rendering of λόγος, but as Bruce wrote, "it would be difficult to find one less inadequate." The meaning of λόγος in John's prologue has been at the center of controversy for many years. One of the writer's teachers said that people writing about the λόγος have probably written over one hundred thousand pages on what John meant by "word." ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

Horner has some interesting comments on the **Prologue** John 1:1-18 - The **Prologue** of the Gospel of John is profoundly and gloriously theological, and while the suggestion may come to mind that it would be better to quickly move on to the more simple narrative chapters, especially when presenting this truth to an unbeliever or even an immature Christian, yet this temptation is to be resisted at all costs. If it be agreed that John 1:19-12:50 is designed to present Jesus Christ as the personal object of saving faith, then it needs to be appreciated that John 1:1-18 intentionally qualifies, in elevated terms, the full dimensions of this same saving Person. In other words, before we reach such *evangelistic* overtures as John 3:16 in which the universal offer of Jesus Christ is plainly described, we need to be clear about who this Jesus Christ is in exact terms, and such a vital explanation is given in John 1:1-18.

Horner on the comparison of John's introduction with Genesis 1:1-3:24 - The incorporation of the teaching of Genesis 1-3 into the commencement of John's Gospel is probably more substantial than a casual reading might reveal. To begin with, John's orderly description of "**beginning**," Jn 1:1-2, "**God**," Jn 1:1-2, "**came into being**," Jn 1:3, "**life**," Jn 1:4, "**light**," Jn 1:4-5, 7-9, "**darkness**," Jn 1:5, "**man**," Jn 1:6, 9, very much parallels similar terminology in Genesis 1:1-31. Also consider that the Prologue includes the revelation of **God on earth**, Jn 1:14, 18, **sin**, Jn 1:10, and **grace**, Jn 1:16-17. So Genesis likewise describes **God as present on earth**, Ge 3:8-9, **sin**, Ge 3:1-7, and **grace**, Ge 3:15.

Andreas J. Köstenberger observes a "timeline" in the **Prologue** in which John "shows the progression from preexistence (Jn 1:1–2) to creation (Jn 1:3), the time subsequent to creation but prior to the incarnation (Jn 1:4–5) (**Ed**: Not sure I agree with that division as the light shining in the darkness sure sounds like Jesus among men!), the Baptist (Jn 1:6–8), and the incarnation and its results

and benefits (Jn 1:9–18)" **Kostenberger** adds that "the prologue doubtless represents one of the most beautiful and carefully crafted poetic portions in the entire NT. John uses a form of "staircase parallelism," introducing a concept at the end of one line and taking it up at the beginning of the next (Culpepper 1980–81: 9–10). The pattern is broken in Jn 1:6–9, which is written in more pedestrian prose, but is resumed in Jn 1:10–11 and again in Jn 1:17 " ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#))

Arthur W. Pink on the Gospel of John - "In this book we are shown that the one who was heralded by the angels to the Bethlehem shepherds, who walked this earth for thirty-three years, who was crucified at Calvary, who rose in triumph from the grave, and who forty days later departed from these scenes, was none other than the Lord of Glory. The evidence for this is overwhelming, the proofs almost without number, and the effect of contemplating them must be to bow our hearts in worship before 'the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13)." ([John 1:1-13 Christ the Eternal Word](#))

Here is **A W Pink's outline** of the first 13 verses... How entirely different is this from the opening verses of the other Gospels! John opens by immediately presenting Christ not as the Son of David, nor as the Son of man, but as the Son of God. John takes us back to the beginning, and shows that the Lord Jesus had no beginning. John goes behind creation and shows that the Saviour was Himself the Creator. Every clause in these verses calls for our most careful and prayerful attention.

1. The Relation of Christ to Time—"In the beginning," therefore, Eternal: John 1:1.
2. The Relation of Christ to the Godhead—"With God," therefore, One of the Holy **Trinity**: John 1:1.
3. The Relation of Christ to the Holy **Trinity**—"God was the Word"—the Revealer: John 1:1.
4. The Relation of Christ to the Universe—"All things were made by him"—the Creator: John 1:3.
5. The Relation of Christ to Men—Their "Light": John 1:4, 5.
6. The Relation of John the Baptist to Christ—"Witness" of His Deity: John 1:6–9.
7. The Reception which Christ met here: John 1:10–13.
 - (a) "The world knew him not": John 1:10.
 - (b) "His own (Israel) received him not": John 1:11.
 - (c) A company born of God "received him": John 1:12, 13.

([John 1:1-13 Christ the Eternal Word](#))

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We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,
and was made Man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism (Ed: spiritual) for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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Irving Jensen - Survey of the NT - Used by permission

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:En arche en (3SIAI) o logos kai o logos he pros ton theon kai theos he o logos (NASB: Lockman)

BGT ἡ ἀρχὴ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

NET In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God.

CSB In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

ESV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

NIV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

NLT In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

NRS In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

NJB In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God.

NAB In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

YLT In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;

MIT In the beginning the word intrinsic to God, identifying God, was active.

TLB - Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God.

Phillips - At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that word, was with God, and was God, and he existed with God from the beginning.

Moffatt - The Logos existed in the very beginning, the Logos was with God, the Logos was divine.

NLT - In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

ICB - Before the world began, there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. (International Children's Bible)

Barclay - When the world had its beginning, the word was already there; and the word was with God; and the word was God. This word was in the beginning with God.

- **the beginning:** John 1:2 Ge 1:1 Pr 8:22-31 Eph 3:9 Col 1:17 Heb 1:10 Heb 7:3 Heb 13:8 Rev 1:2,8,11 Rev 2:8 Rev 21:6 Rev 22:13
- **the Word:** John 1:14 1Jn 1:1,2 5:7 Rev 19:13
- **with:** John 1:18 Jn 16:28 Jn 17:5 Pr 8:22-30 1Jn 1:2
- **the Word was:** John 10:30-33 Jn 20:28 Ps 45:6 Isa 7:14 Isa 9:6 Isa 40:9-11 Mt 1:23 Ro 9:5 Php 2:6 1Ti 3:16 Titus 2:13 Heb 1:8-13 2Pe 1:1 1Jn 5:7,20
- **John 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

(1) ETERNALLY PREEXISTENT: IN THE BEGINNING JESUS WAS ALREADY THERE

John 1:1-5 Summarized...

- John 1:1-2 Christ is Eternal
- John 1:3 Christ is the Creator
- John 1:4-5 Christ is Life and Light
- John 1:1a - Christ was preexistent
- John 1:1b - Christ was co-existent
- John 1:1c - Christ was self-existent

Before there was any beginning, the Word had been

In the beginning (en arche) - What *beginning*? When is the *beginning*? Does he mean the *beginning* of eternity? Of course not, as eternity by its very nature has no *beginning* and no end, a truth no finite mind can fully grasp. What John is saying could be paraphrased "Before even time began was the Word." And so *beginning* refers to the inception of creation. When the creation came into existent, Jesus was already there. No matter how far back we believe the *beginning* to be, we will find Jesus, the pre-existent Word. **Athanasius** put it this way "There never was when He was not, when the Son of God was not." ([Athanasius' Discourse I Against the Arians -See point 14](#)) In other words, the Word was not created (He is "un-created")! In fact as we will discuss in more detail on John 1:3, He not only pre-existed eternally before creation, He created creation, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him." (Col 1:16+) The writer of Hebrews adds that "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the **Word of God**, (not logos but **rhema**, the spoken word, but the phrase "Word of God" still suggests a double entendre!) so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." (Heb 11:3+) And so in contrast to Matthew and Luke which begin with a classic genealogy, John begins with a "*cosmic genealogy*" as it were.

John Phillips - John does not waste his time arguing with the Gnostic and other heretics. Rather, he states certain facts that he knows beyond all shadow of doubt to be true. Let them speculate; he knows. (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

This phrase **in the beginning** is used in...

Genesis 1:1 **In the beginning** God created the heavens and the earth. (Lxx = *en arche epoinsen o theos ton ouranon kai ten gen*)

Hebrews 1:10 - And, "THOU, LORD, **IN THE BEGINNING** DIDST LAY THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

Moses confronts us with the majesty of God in creation in Genesis 1:1. John confronts us with the majesty of the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ in John 1:1.

Macleod quoting Hunter says "Mark begins his story of Jesus at Jordan, Matthew and Luke start at Bethlehem. But John goes back to the very beginning of history, even beyond it, as if to say, 'There is only one true perspective in which to see the story—you must see it in the light of eternity.'... In the first stanza of his λόγος hymn John affirmed three truths about the λόγος. First, He existed eternally before the creation of the universe. Second, He coexisted eternally with God. Third, He is Himself of the same nature as God. In His nature He is essential deity. ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

John Trapp - Here this heavenly eagle, John the Divine, soars at first out of sight. Here doth God detonate ab alto, thunder from on high. This barbarian (said the philosopher, concerning our evangelist) hath comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines than we have done in all our voluminous discourses. {a} Happy had it been for him if he had been made, by this first chapter, of an atheist, a true Christian, as learned Junius was. {b} But he only admired it, and so left it where he found it; as too many do the Word at this

day.

Bruce Milne comments on the reason the use of Logos or Word would be so appealing to John's Jewish readers - The opening phrase **In the beginning** ... links directly to Genesis 1:1: 'In the beginning God created ...'. This allusion is the more likely bearing in mind that Jewish readers referred to the Bible books by their opening words. Thus In the beginning is shorthand for Genesis. 'The Word of God' appears in Genesis chapter 1 as the means whereby God accomplishes his acts of creation, 'God said, "Let there be light" ' (so also Ge 1:6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). The Word of God is God himself in his creative action. **More generally in the Old Testament the Word of God is God in his powerful and effective action in creation** (Ps. 33:6), **deliverance** (Ps. 107:20), and **judgment** (Ps. 29:3-4.; Is. 55:11). It is the 'Word of God' who gives understanding to the prophets concerning the mind and will of God (cf. Isa. 38:4; Jer. 1:4; Ezek. 1:3). This thought of God's illumination is developed and personified in the concept of 'wisdom', particularly in the book of Proverbs; cf. 'The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,... I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began... I was there when he set the heavens in place,... I was the craftsman at his side... rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind' (Pr. 8:22-23, 27, 30, 31). 'The Word of God' also served as a common replacement for the divine name when the Greek Old Testament (**Septuagint**) was read in the synagogue, and the speaker required an alternative to express the unmentionable Name of the Lord. Generally in the Old Testament 'Word of God', logos, refers to an action rather than an idea. ([The Message of John Bible Speaks Today](#)) (Bolding added)

Calvin - "The Evangelist sends us to the eternal sanctuary of God and teaches us that the Word was, as it were, hidden there before He revealed Himself in the outward workmanship of the world."

John's introductory words "**in the beginning**" would have expected to be followed by the word "God" as in Genesis 1:1, but instead introduce the Word. And so even with this first phrase, John causes us to begin thinking that this "Word" is more than an abstract philosophical concept as seen in the Greek culture, but that the Word was divine, which he subsequently proves.

An old writer suggests "These words (Jn 1:1) should be written upon tablets of gold and hung in every church building in the world."

In the 2nd century, Clement of Alexandria wrote that one of the atheistic Platonic philosophers, said of John 1:1-3, "This barbarian hath comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines, than we have done in all our voluminous discourses."

Ray Stedman on "**In the beginning was the Word**" - The beginning of what? Well, the beginning of everything. In other words, this Word of God was eternal; it always has existed. It was not called Jesus before he came as a man. The Word, then, was called other names in the Old Testament. You will find that he is called "The Angel of the LORD," or sometimes simply, "the Son." (Ps 2:7, Ps 2:12) Jesus was the Son of God before he came to earth. ([Who is Jesus- - John 1:1-4](#))

Steven Cole writes that "John wants us to stand in awe of Jesus as God and as the One who reveals the unseen God to us, just as a word reveals an unseen thought. It is foundational to the Christian faith and crucial to your personal faith that you understand and embrace the truth that Jesus Christ is fully God. Bishop Moule once stated (source unknown), "A Savior not quite God is a bridge broken at the farther end." John Mitchell put it (An Everlasting Love [Multnomah Press], pp. 13, 14), "If Jesus is not God, then we are sinners without a Savior... If Jesus were only a man, then He died for His own sins. And we are still in our sins. We have no hope." In order to reconcile sinful people to the holy God, Jesus must be God in human flesh. John skillfully presents this in the prologue (1:1-18) of his Gospel. Colin Kruse (John [IVP Academic], pp. 59-60) points out: "The Prologue ... introduces the main themes that are to appear throughout the Gospel: Jesus' pre-existence (Jn 1:1a/ Jn 17:5), Jesus' union with God (Jn 1:1c/Jn 8:58; 10:30; 20:28), the coming of life in Jesus (Jn 1:4a/Jn 5:26; 6:33; 10:10; 11:25-26; 14:6), the coming of light in Jesus (Jn 1:4b, 9/ Jn 3:19; 8:12; 12:46), the conflict between light and darkness (Jn 1:5, Jn 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46), believing in Jesus (Jn 1:7, 12, Jn 2:11; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:69; 11:25; 14:1; 16:27; 17:21; 20:25), the rejection of Jesus (Jn 1:10c, 11, Jn 4:44; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31; 12:37-40; 15:18), divine regeneration (Jn 1:13, Jn 3:1-7), the glory of Jesus (Jn 1:14, Jn 12:41; 17:5, 22, 24), the grace and truth of God in Jesus (Jn 1:14, 17, Jn 4:24; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 18:38), Jesus and Moses/the law (Jn 1:17, Jn 1:45; 3:14; 5:46; 6:32; 7:19; 9:29), only Jesus has seen God (Jn 1:18, 6:46), and Jesus' revelation of the Father (Jn 1:18, Jn 3:34; 8:19, 38; 12:49-50; 14:6-11; 17:8)." Kruse compares the Prologue in John to a foyer in a theater, where you can see various scenes from the drama that you are about to see inside. ([John 1:1-5 Jesus: Revealer of God - his notes function like a commentary](#))

Milne - John's contention is that at the point where we reach the boundary of all human conceptualizing we have to begin our speaking about Jesus Christ; he shares God's eternity; he was with God in the beginning (2). 'If we ask the fundamental question of the philosopher, "Why is there not nothing?" the answer is that in the "beginning was the Word" '. Although he lived within time as a human being he is not bound by time. He predates all existence; 'there never was when he was not' (Athanasius). However far back we set the beginning of things, and whatever model we employ to describe that origin, according to John, Jesus was present as the presiding Lord of that moment and event (cf. Ge 1:3). This truth has major implications for the way we conceive God. Since Jesus is the eternal Word of God (14), and since 'I [Jesus] and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30) and 'Anyone who has seen me [Jesus] has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9), God is always Jesus-like! 'God is Christlike and in Him is no unChristlikeness at all' (A. M. Ramsey). This is important for the way we read the Old Testament. **The significance of this opening phrase of John is that the God who**

speaks in the Old Testament, who entered into covenant with his people Israel, and inspired and moved the prophets, was none other than the God known in Jesus Christ. God has not changed or evolved. Jesus Christ was always at the heart of God. ([The Message of John Bible Speaks Today](#)) (Bolding added)

A W Pink - "In the beginning" is something we are unable to comprehend: it is one of those matchless sweeps of inspiration which rises above the level of human thought. "In the beginning was the word," and we are equally unable to grasp the final meaning of this. A "word" is an expression: by words we articulate our speech. The Word of God, then, is Deity expressing itself in audible terms. And yet, when we have said this, how much there is that we leave unsaid! ([John 1:1-13 Christ the Eternal Word](#))

Alexander Maclaren - The other Gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with 'the bosom of the Father.' Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his 'in the beginning.' ([John 1 Commentary](#))

F B Meyer on John's unusual introduction, so different for example from Paul in Ro 1:1 - "The writer does not stay to introduce himself, to mention his name, or give proofs of his trustworthiness. With singular abruptness, with no attempt to substantiate his own claims or the claims of this marvelous treatise, he casts it into the teeming world of human thought and life, as Jochabed launched the cradle on the bosom of the Nile... The blessed Spirit, found congenial work in glorifying the Lord through the pen of His dearest friend and aptest pupil."

Beginning (746)(**arche**) refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being. **Arché** refers to first in relation to time (priority in time, the beginning of anything, the origin and by far the most common use in the NT. In context arche "means that He (the Word) was before all else." (Morris) Arche can also convey the meaning of origin, such as "origin in the sense of basic cause." (Morris) **William Barclay** translates it in the beginning "**the Word** was already there." **NLT** has "In the beginning the Word already existed."

MacArthur on **arche** - can mean "source," or "origin" (cf. Col. 1:18; Rev. 3:14); or "rule," "authority," "ruler," or "one in authority" (cf. Luke 12:11; 20:20; Ro 8:38; 1Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1). Both of those connotations are true of Christ, who is both the Creator of the universe (Jn 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) and its ruler (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:20–22; Phil. 2:9–11). But **archē** refers here to the beginning of the universe depicted in Genesis 1:1.

Arche is definitely a favorite word of John (8x in the Gospel, 10x in his epistles, 3x in Revelation). Arche is found a total of 55x in 54 verses in the NT. - Mt 19:4, 8; 24:8, 21; Mk 1:1; 10:6; 13:8, 19; Luke 1:2; 12:11; 20:20; John 1:1-2; 2:11; 6:64; 8:25, 44; 15:27; 16:4; Acts 10:11; 11:5, 15; 26:4; Ro 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Phil 4:15; Col 1:16, 18; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1; Heb 1:10; 2:3; 3:14; 5:12; 6:1; 7:3; 2Pet 3:4; 1John 1:1; 2:7, 13-14, 24 (twice); 1Jn 3:8, 11; 2 John 1:5-6; Jude 1:6; Rev 3:14; 21:6; 22:13

As **Morris** goes on to add "There never was a time when the Word was not. There never was a thing that did not depend on Him (the Word) for its existence (cf Col 1:17)."

Since the Word (Jesus) had no beginning, a genealogy (as in Matthew and Luke) would be out of place in this Gospel.

It is interesting that Mark begins his gospel with "The **beginning (arche)** of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mk 1:1) **D A Carson** has an intriguing comment on the use of "**beginning**" in both Gospels writing "Since Mark begins his Gospel with the same word, 'The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ', it is also possible that John is making an allusion to his colleague's work, saying in effect, 'Mark has told you about the beginning of Jesus' public ministry; I want to show you that the starting point of the gospel can be traced farther back than that, before the beginning of the entire universe.'"

Notice the difference between John and the other Gospel writers - The other Gospel writers begin with **Bethlehem**, but John begins with "the **bosom** of the Father." Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests, but John dates his in the timeless past "**in the beginning.**"

Alpha, Omega—our God we proclaim,
Eternal, unchanging, always the same;
He's the beginning and He is the end,
He is our Savior, our Lord, and our Friend.
—Fitzhugh

Was the Word - John begins without hesitation, without genealogy, without apology, without doubt by describing our Lord's "ineffable Person!" In three sweeping statements John presents the Word as fully God.

The verb **was (ēn)** is in the **imperfect tense** which depicts continual existence, a continuous state, not a completed past. As **Phillips** says "It suggests the idea of "absolute, supra-temporal existence." Or stated another way, the verb in this tense "denotes neither a completed state nor a coming into being. It is appropriate to eternal, unchanging being. John is affirming that the Word existed before creation, which makes it clear that the Word was not created." (Morris). "The Word continually was" is the idea. This

truth provides definitive proof of Christ's deity, for only God is eternal. As **Phillips** says John "does not refer to a **start**, but to an infinite **state**!" (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

Was (1510) (**ēn** which is the imperfect form of **eimi**) means to be and is the usual verb for existence. In the metaphysical sense as in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word," meaning it had been before there was any beginning or existed before the beginning of anything; John 8:50, *estín*, in the pres. tense indicating." (**Zodhiates**) Notice John does not say in the beginning CAME the Word or BEGAN the Word, but WAS the Word. This verb is in the **imperfect tense** which speaks of continuous action. In a word, the Word was continually existing!

Watch John's masterful use of the Greek verbs and Greek tenses -- four times in Jn 1:1-2 he uses the **imperfect tense** (**ēn**) of the verb **eimi** to say the Word **was** God (all of John's statements regarding His pre-existence are in this tense), but in Jn 1:14+ he uses the verb **ginomai** in the **aoist tense** (**egeneto**) (**punctiliar**, an instantaneous intervention, decisive, at a moment or point in time - the aorist usage here refers to some historical time in the past as the beginning of the new state) He became Man. So Jesus who always **was** God, **became** Man in a moment in time, doing so without ceasing to be God! Amazing truth! John never says Christ **became** God but only that He **was** (always) God!

It is notable that the verb **ēn** (imperfect of **eimi**) is used by John in every instance where he is referring to the **eternal** state of Jesus (see Jn 1:1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15). One exception might be John's use of **ginomai** in an allusion to Jesus' existence before [implying His eternal state] John (the Baptist) (Jn 1:15-note) As discussed above John uses **ginomai** in the **aoist tense** (**egeneto**) to refer to becoming something that one was not before in John 1:14-note where God became a Man. In addition to John 1:14, other uses of **ginomai** in the **aoist tense** (**egeneto**) in John's prologue are found in John 1:3-note (twice in the phrase "came into being"), John 1:6 ("There **came** a man, sent from God"), John 1:10-note ("the world was **made** through Him") and John 1:17-note ("grace and truth **were realized** [came] through Jesus Christ."). Note that **ginomai** is also used in the **perfect tense** in John 1:3 ("**has come into being**") and John 1:15-note ("He **existed** before me"), where the **perfect tense** implies a continuing existence of a new state.

John Phillips commenting on John's use of the imperfect tense says "This is not nearly so arresting in English as it is in the original. In each case it sets before the reader not something past, or present, or future, but something ongoing. It refers to a mode of existence that transcends time. Time is a device to help finite beings relate to their mode of existence. The verb John uses takes us into the sphere of the timeless. In other words, the one John calls "the Word" belongs to a realm where time does not matter. The word did not have a beginning. The word will never have an ending. The word belongs to eternity... But says John, when we think of Jesus, that is where we must begin. We must go back to the dateless past, to a time before time. We must think of Jesus as never having begun at all. He is eternally God." (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

D A Carson draws our attention to John's specific choice of the verb **eimi** (used 3x in Jn 1:1, the first being the most theologically significant - as an aside **eimi** is used 35x in chapter 1.) which means "I am" and not the verb **ginomai** which means "to become" writing "Although the meanings of **ēn** ('was' - {imperfect tense of **eimi**}) and **egeneto** (from **ginomai**) (rendered 'were made' in Jn 1:3, 'came' in Jn 1:6 and 'became' in Jn 1:14) often overlap, **John repeatedly uses the two verbs side by side to establish something of a contrast**. For example, in Jn 8:58 Jesus insists, '[Before] Abraham was born [a form of the second verb **Ed** - **eimi** in the present tense]], I am [a form of the first verb **Ed** - **genesthai** = **ginomai** in the aorist tense]].' In other words, when John uses the two verbs (**eimi** and **ginomai**) in the same context, **ēn** frequently signals **existence**, whereas **egeneto** signals '**coming into being**' or '**coming into use**'. In the beginning, the Word was already in existence. Stretch our imagination backward as we will, we can find no point in time where we may agree with Anus, who, speaking of the Word, said, 'There was once when he was not.'" ([The Gospel according to John -The Pillar New Testament Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

William Hendriksen remarks, this phrase "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God" is "just another way of saying that He existed from all eternity. He was not what certain heretics claimed Him to be, a created being." In fact Christ did not merely exist, but He began the beginning (creation).

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Fortner - The word translated "**was**" literally means "was existing." John is telling us that whenever the beginning was the Word already was. He is declaring that he who is God our Savior is the eternal One. He is that One who "was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). No created mind can plunge the depths of this vast ocean or traverse its shoreless breadth. When time and creatures came into being, the Word was. No words could have been chosen by God the Holy Spirit that could more perfectly or more emphatically declare that our Lord Jesus Christ is the absolute, uncreated, eternal God. ([Sermon on Jn 1:1](#))

William Barclay - It is told that a little girl was once confronted with some of the more bloodthirsty and savage parts of the Old Testament. Her comment was: "But that happened before God became a Christian!" If we may so put it with all reverence, when John says that the word was always there, he is saying that God was always a Christian. He is telling us that God was and is and

ever shall be like Jesus; but men could never know and realize that until Jesus came.

John is the only writer to specifically refer to Jesus as the Word. First notice that John clearly identifies the Word by putting "flesh and blood" on the Logos...

John 1:14-note And the **Word** became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

From this passage it is clear that John is speaking of Jesus, even though he actually never mentions the specific name Jesus until John 1:17. I once heard an anecdotal story that illustrates the power of the Logos to save a soul. At a summer youth camp the attendees began to go through the Gospel of John and when the leader explained to one young man that the Word of John 1:1 became flesh in John 1:14 he received Jesus as his Savior and was born again! No exposition of the text. No apologetics. Just the power of the Logos!

And again in his first letter and the Revelation John refers to Jesus as the Logos, the Word of Life, the Word of God...

1 John 1:1-note What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the **Word of Life**—

Comment: Here John uses the phrase "from the beginning" to refer to the beginning of Jesus earthly 3 year ministry, whereas here in John 1:1 the phrase "in the beginning" is used in "an absolute sense to refer to the beginning of the time-space-material universe." (MacArthur)

Revelation 19:13-note And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The **Word of God**

Garland comments: Like God's literal word which He has magnified above His name (Ps. 138:2), God highly exalted Jesus and has given Him the Name above every name (Php. 2:9). Scripture informs us: "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6 cf. Heb. 11:3; 2Pe. 3:5)... The Logos or Word is the expression of God's nature in understandable terms, and whether those terms be mercy or judgment they are both equally the message of God. This title also emphasizes Jesus' role in creation (John 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14)—a key theme explaining why God has ultimate dominion to retake the earth at His Second Coming (Rev. 3:14; 4:11; 10:6).

Wiersbe on the Logos, **the Word** - Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus Christ is God's "**Word**" to reveal His heart and mind to us. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). A word is composed of letters, and Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:8), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. According to Hebrews 1:1–3, Jesus Christ is God's last Word to mankind, for He is the climax of divine revelation. ([The Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Words are important for **words** that convey **thoughts**. We don't truly know what another person is thinking unless they express their thoughts in words (and so it is with God - how could we possibly know what He is thinking if He did not express Himself in words!). It is by means of words that we communicate. It is by means of words that we reveal what is happening. John chooses the word, **Logos**, which was familiar in the minds of both Hebrew and Greek thinkers, and both groups to one degree or another had the idea of *beginnings* related to the word **Logos**. And so John's opening would remind the Hebrew thinker of Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning - Lxx = "en arche" just as in Jn 1:1) and Genesis 1:3 ("Then God said, "Let there be light.") God spoke and all came into existence (Heb 11:3-note) To the Greek mind **Logos** was "regarded in a multi-various and ambiguous fashion. The word **Logos** has a unique capacity to convey God's ultimate Self disclosure in the Person of His Son." (Alistair Begg)

Thomas Whitelaw on the **Word** - The theme of the evangelist's discourse was not a metaphysical abstraction, or a poetical personification, but a veritable Person.

Webster says that the noun "**word**" means "something that is said, talk, discourse, living speech, oral expression or declaration." **Word** is an expression that communicates. In a parallel passage in Hebrews 1 we read that "God, **after He spoke** long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **in these last days has spoken to us in His Son**(THE WORD), Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:1-3-note)

While the OT frequently portrayed God's **WORD** in personal terms (Deut 32:47, Ps. 33:6; 107:20; 147:15, 18; Isa. 55:10-11), it was not until John's description that the Word was identified as an actual Person, a true living Word.

By the **word of the LORD** the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. (Ps 33:6)

Spurgeon - The angelic heavens, the sidereal heavens, and the firmament or terrestrial heavens, were all made to start into existence by a word; what if we say by the Word, "For without him was not anything made that is made." (Jn 1:3) It is interesting to note the mention of the Spirit in the next clause, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth; the breath is the same as is elsewhere rendered Spirit. Thus the three persons of the Godhead unite in creating all things. How easy for the Lord to make the most ponderous orbs, and the most glorious angels! A **word**, a breath could do it. It is as easy for God to create the universe as for a man to breathe, nay, far easier, for man breathes not independently, but borrows the breath in his nostrils from his Maker. It may be gathered from this verse that the constitution of all things is from the infinite wisdom, for his word may mean his appointment and determination. A wise and merciful **Word** has arranged, and a living Spirit sustains all the creation of Jehovah.

In a word, **the Word** is the "audible" and "visible" representation of the invisible God to the ears and eyes of finite man. Paul writes that God "dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see." (1Ti 6:16) John writes "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." (Jn 1:18) When Philip ask Jesus to show them the Father, He replied "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (Jn 14:9) Paul wrote that "God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2Cor 4:6) And so to know Christ is to encounter the life-transforming glory of the invisible God. Just as creation in Genesis began with light, so also does the new creation, for God shines in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and births spiritual life.

JESUS IS THE WORD

Ray Stedman asks "What is a word, anyway? A word is an audible or a visual expression of a thought. Thoughts are incommunicable until they are put into words. Several times the Scripture asks. "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" The answer is, "No one." Nobody knows what God thinks until he tells us. In fact, we might just as well ask, "Who has known your mind?" until you express it in words. Who has known my thoughts? I am trying to convey to you today the thoughts that are in my mind, and the only medium I have is words. You are listening to what I am trying to say, so you are thinking my thoughts because my words shape and form the meaning of them. That is what John means here. When Jesus was among us as a man he expressed what was going on in the mind of God. He told us the thoughts of God. He was God's utterance on earth, unveiling to us what Paul calls "that secret and hidden wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 2:7). What God thinks is reality; that is what ultimately comes into being. God thought about an earth and it came into being. God thought about a universe and it sprang into being. God thought about everything we see around us -- even we ourselves -- and we came into being. So what exists are the thoughts of God. That is ultimate; that is behind everything. Jesus came to unfold that to us and convey it in words that we cannot mistake." ([Who is Jesus-John 1:1-4](#))

Thou art the Everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son;
God manifestly seen and heard,
And Heaven's beloved One.
In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's glories shine;
Of the full Deity possessed,
Eternally divine.
True Image of the Infinite,
Whose essence is concealed;
Brightness of uncreated light;
The heart of God revealed.

The Word (3055) (lógos/logos from légō = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. To the Greek philosophers Logos was the impersonal, abstract principle of reason and order in the universe. Logos referred "to the abstract conception that lies behind everything concrete-to the ideal." (Phillips - BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#)) However, Jesus was not an impersonal source, force, principle, or emanation, but was a Person who became a Man (Jn 1:14).

Utley - "Jn 1:1-18 are an attempt to relate to both Hebrew and Greek minds by use of the term logos." Utley goes on to summarize

the attraction of Logos to both Jews and Greeks - "**Hebrew background** - (a) The power of the spoken word (Isa. 55:11; Ps. 33:6; 107:20; 145:15), as in Creation (Ge 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29) and the Patriarchal blessing (Gen. 27:1ff; 49:1) (b) Proverbs 8:12–23 personifies "Wisdom" as God's first creation and agent of all creation (cf. Ps. 33:6 and the non-canonical Wisdom of Solomon, 9:9) (c.) the Targums (Aramaic translations and commentaries) substitute the phrase "Word of God" for logos because of their discomfort with anthropomorphic terms. **Greek background** - (a.) Heraclitus - the world was in flux; the impersonal divine and unchanging logos held it together and guided the changing process. (b.) Plato - the impersonal and unchanging logos kept the planets on course and determined the seasons. (c.) Stoics - the logos was the "world reason" or manager, but was semi-personal (d.) Philo - he personified the concept of logos as "High Priest that set the soul of man before God," or "the bridge between man and God," or "the tiller by which the Pilot of the universe steers all things" (kosmocrater)."

See Related Discussion by William Barclay - Jewish and Greek Background related to "Logos"

See Barclay's excellent summary of the background on [The LOGOS](#)

Marvin Vincent has a lengthy discussion of the word **logos** including its OT usage and Apocryphal usage - see [John 1 Commentary - Vincent's Word Studies](#).

Although **Logos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **logos** is somewhat more complex. In the Greek mind and as used by secular and philosophical Greek writers, **lógos** did not mean merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name. Let me illustrate this somewhat subtle nuance in the meaning of **lógos** with an example from the **Septuagint (LXX)** (Greek of the Hebrew OT) in which **lógos** is used in the well known phrase the Ten Commandments. The Septuagint translates this phrase using the word **lógos** as "the ten (deka) words (logoi)" (Ex 34:28), this phrase giving us the familiar term Decalogue. Clearly each of the "Ten Commandments" is not just words but words which express a thought or concept behind those words. This then is the essence of the meaning of **lógos** and so it should not be surprising that depending on the context **lógos** is translated with words such as "saying, instruction, message, news, preaching, question, statement, teaching, etc". This understanding of **lógos** also helps understand John's repeated usage of this Greek word as a synonym for the second Person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

W Hall Harris has an instructive comment on John's use of the **Logos** - On the use of ho logos: It is not proven beyond doubt whether the term, as John uses it, is to be derived from Jewish or Greek backgrounds or some other source. Nor is it precisely plain what the author meant by it. He does not tell us, and we are left to work out the precise allusion and significance for ourselves. R. P. Casey states regarding the Prologue: "the principal difficulty lies neither in its style nor in its terminology but in the fact that its author has his feet planted firmly in two worlds: that of the Old Testament and that of Hellenistic philosophy and he allows his gaze to wander easily from one to the other. At every important point he has not only two thoughts instead of one, but two sets of allusions in mind."

Greek historical backgrounds: As a philosophical term, logos meant the 'world-soul', the soul of the universe. This was an all-pervading principle, the rational principle of the universe. It was a creative energy. In one sense, all things came from it; in another, men derived their wisdom from it. These concepts are at least as old as Heraclitus (6th cent. BC): the logos is "always existent" and "all things happen through this logos".

Later Hellenistic thought: Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher of the early 1st century, frequently mentions the logos (it appears over 1400 times in his writings), but he is really concerned with his Platonic distinction between this material world and the real, heavenly world of ideas. It was the Stoics who actually developed the concept of logos. They abandoned Plato's heavenly archetypes in favor of the thought (closer to Heraclitus) that the Universe is pervaded by logos, the eternal Reason. They were convinced of the ultimate rationality of the universe, and used the term logos to express this conviction. It was the 'force' (!) that originated and permeated and directed all things. It was the supreme governing principle of the universe. But the Stoics did not think of the logos as personal, nor did they understand it as we would understand God (i.e. as a person to be worshipped).

The Evangelist, then, is using a term that would be widely recognized among the Greeks. But the 'man in the street' would not know its precise significance, any more than most of us would understand the terms 'relativity' or 'nuclear fission'. But he would know it meant something very important. The rest of the Fourth Gospel, however, shows little trace of acquaintance with Greek philosophy, and even less of dependence on it. John, in his use of logos, is cutting across the fundamental Greek concept of the gods: they were detached, they regarded the struggles and heartaches and joys and fears of the world with serene, divine lack of feeling. John uses logos to portray a God so involved, so caring, so loving and giving that he becomes incarnate within his creation. ([Prologue John 1:1-18 - Bible.org](#))

William Barclay summarizes well: "John spoke to a world which thought of the gods in terms of passionless apatheia and serene

detachment. He pointed at Jesus Christ and said: 'Here is the mind of God; here is the expression of the thought of God; here is **the logos**. And men were confronted with a God Who cared so passionately and Who loved so sacrificially that His expression was Jesus Christ and His emblem a Cross.' ([Quoted by W Hall Harris](#))

William Temple states that the **logos** "alike for Jew and Gentile represents the ruling fact of the universe, and represents that fact as the self-expression of God. The Jew will remember that 'by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made'; the Greek will think of the rational principle of which all natural laws are particular expressions. Both will agree that this Logos is the starting-point of all things."

Harris makes a good point that when John chooses **logos** he "was using a term which, with various shades of meaning, **was in common use everywhere. He could count on all men catching his essential meaning.** But for John, the **Word** was not a *principle*, but a *living Being*, the Source of life; not a *personification*, but a *Person*, and that Person divine. Note: John never uses the absolute, specific, unrelated term **logos** outside of the prologue. Elsewhere it is always modified or clarified, and does not occur in the Gospel again in the sense of the **logos**. Why not? Probably because in the Prologue we are looking at **pre-existence. John 1:14 becomes the point of transition:** the Word is now Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, He is called **Jesus** from this point on, no longer *ho logos*. Jesus and the Logos are an identity; the Logos is the pre-existent Christ. ([Prologue John 1:1-18](#)) (Bolding added)

As an aside John's description as the Word gives us absolutely no clue as to Jesus' physical appearance and in fact there are no such descriptions anywhere in the Scripture. Most of our modern impressions of the way Jesus looked are the result of the imagination of gifted painters. Indeed, every picture of Jesus that we do have is certain to present a concept of Him which is far less than what God wants to have of His Son! The Gospel of John is a far better way to conceive of Jesus.

How do we know identity of the Word? By examining the **context** where we see that in the Prologue (Jn 1:1-18) John clearly explains the identity of the Word describing His incarnation writing - "And the **Word** became flesh (incarnation), and dwelt (tabernacled) among us (the first century Jews and disciples), and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14-note) In **context**, John clearly identifies **the Word** as the long expected **Messiah** (Christ or **Christos** - cf Jn 1:41). In a parallel passage in John's epistle, he writes "What was **from the beginning**, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life." So here John calls Him the Word of Life and emphasizes His physical present among them. Some say that while Jesus is Christ's earthly name (Mt. 1:21), **the Word** is His eternal name.

Hendriksen notes that "A word serves two distinct purposes: a. it gives expression to the inner thought, the soul of the man, doing this even though no one else is present to hear what is said or to read what is thought; and b. it reveals this thought (hence, the soul of the speaker) to others. Christ is the Word of God in both respects: he expresses or reflects the mind of God; also, he reveals God to man (Jn 1:18; cf. Matt. 11:27; Heb. 1:3).

J Vernon McGee - "**The Word**" is one of the highest and most profound titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. To determine the exact meaning is not easy. Obviously the Lord Jesus Christ is not the **logos** of Greek philosophy; rather He is the **memra** (see following note) of the Hebrew Scriptures. Notice how important the Word is in the Old Testament. For instance, the name for Jehovah was never pronounced. It was such a holy word that they never used it at all. But this is the One who is the Word and, gathering up everything that was said of Him in the Old Testament, He is now presented as the One "**In the beginning.**" This **beginning** antedates the very first words in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) That beginning can be dated, although I do not believe that anyone can date it accurately... You see, you and I are dealing with the God of eternity. When you go back to creation He is already there, and that is exactly the way this is used—"in the beginning was the Word" ... **Was** (as Dr. Lenski points out) is known as a durative imperfect, meaning continued action. It means that the Word was in the beginning. What beginning? Just as far back as you want to go. The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Does that begin God? No, just keep on going back... let's put down a point there... He already **was**; He comes out of eternity to meet us. He did not begin. "**In the beginning was the Word**"—He was already there when the **beginning** was. "Well," somebody says, "there has to be a beginning somewhere." All right, wherever you begin, He is there to meet you, **He is already past tense.** "**In the beginning was the Word**"—**five words in the original language, and there is not a man on top side of this earth who can put a date on it or understand it or fathom it. This first tremendous statement starts us off in space, you see.**

The **1906 Jewish Encyclopedia** has a fascinating article on the word "**Memra**" which is the OT synonym for **Logos**. Here is a portion of the 1906 entry by Kaufmann Kohler...

(Memra is) "The Word," in the sense of the creative or directive word or speech of God manifesting His power in the world of matter or mind; a term used especially in the Targum as a substitute for "the Lord" when an anthropomorphic expression is to be avoided. Biblical Data: In Scripture "the word of the Lord" commonly denotes the speech addressed to patriarch or prophet (Ge 15:1; Num. 12:6, 23:5; 1Sa 3:21; Amos 5:1-8); but frequently it denotes also the creative word: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. 33:6;

comp. "For He spake, and it was done"; "He sendeth his word, and melteth them [the ice]"; "Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word"; Ps. 33:9, Ps 147:18, Ps 148:8). In this sense it is said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). "The Word," heard and announced by the prophet, often became, in the conception of the seer, an efficacious power apart from God, as was the angel or messenger of God: "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel" (Isa. 9:8); "He sent his word, and healed them" (Ps. 107:20); and comp. "His word runneth very swiftly" (Ps. 147:15)... **Possibly on account of the Christian dogma, rabbinic theology, outside of the Targum literature, made little use of the term "Memra."** (Ed: Interesting!) (MEMRA - JewishEncyclopedia.com)

See **Arnold Fruchtenbaum's** notes below on [MEMRA and LOGOS](#)

John MacArthur on **Logos** - John borrowed the use of the term **'Word'** not only from the vocabulary of the OT but also from Gr. philosophy, in which the term was essentially impersonal, signifying the rational principle of "divine reason," "mind," or even "wisdom." John, however, imbued the term entirely with OT and Christian meaning (e.g., Ge 1:3 where God's Word brought the world into being; Pss 33:6; 107:20; Pr 8:27 where God's Word is His powerful self-expression in creation, wisdom, revelation, and salvation) and made it refer to a person, i.e., Jesus Christ. Greek philosophical usage, therefore, is not the exclusive background of John's thought. Strategically, the term "Word" serves as a bridge-word to reach not only Jews but also the unsaved Greeks. John chose this concept because both Jews and Greeks were familiar with it.

Robert Lightner in his commentary on First John (specifically "the Word of Life" in 1Jn 1:1 note) has a helpful note on **"Logos"** as it relates to **Jesus** "The designation Word (Logos) attracts our attention. What does it mean? What picture does it convey of the Lord Jesus? Let me illustrate: I might have all kinds of ideas, thoughts, suggestions in my mind, all kinds of emotions in my heart, but unless there was some way, some means by which I could convey them to others, they would not know them. This is where words derive their value. Words are vehicles for conveying thoughts to others, and if it is true that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he" then my words will be vehicles for conveying to others what I am. **The Lord Jesus is the Word, the conveyor to men not only of the thoughts of God and the wisdom of God, but the conveyor of what God is. He is the vehicle to reveal God to men,** thus "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father (who has His being in the bosom of the Father), he hath declared him" (John 1:18). As the "Word" our Lord Jesus revealed God in His power in the creation (John 1:3) and upholding of the world (Heb. 1:1-3). He has revealed Him through incarnation (John 1:14) and redemption to the guilty sons of men. Did He not say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)?

William Hendriksen gives an interesting background on **the Logos** - John and the heretics both spoke of the Word (o logos); but though the term was the same, the meaning was different. John's doctrine is not dependent on that of heretics nor on that of speculative philosophers like **Philo**, a prominent Alexandrian who flourished in the first century A.D. One never knows what to make of Philo's Logos. He employs the term no fewer than thirteen hundred times! but the meaning is never very definite. It is described now as a divine attribute, then again as a bridge between God and the world, identical with neither but partaking of the nature of both. Philo allegorized, which makes it difficult to grasp his meaning. Thus, in his comments on Gen. 3:24 he discusses the Cherubim, equipped with flaming sword, who are placed at Eden's gates to prevent access to the tree of life. As Philo sees it, these Cherubim are two divine potencies: God's loving-kindness and his sovereignty. The sword is the Logos or Reason which unites the two. Balaam, the foolish prophet, had no sword (Reason), for he said to the ass: "If I had a sword, I would have pierced thee" (On the Cherubim, XXXII). Surely, the term as employed by the evangelist cannot derive its meaning from such allegorization. It is rooted not in Greek but in Semitic thought. Already in the Old Testament the Word of God is represented as a Person. Note especially Ps. 33:6: "By the Word of Jehovah (**Lxx**: to logo to kuriou) were the heavens made." What is probably the best commentary on John 1:1 is found in **Pr. 8:27-30** "*When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, When He set for the sea its boundary, So that the water should not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him.*" ([New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel According to John](#))

Fortner - A word is an expression, a means of manifestation, communication and revelation. Christ manifests the invisible God, communicates the love, mercy and grace of God, and reveals the attributes and perfections of God. The Word of God, then, is Deity expressing itself. Therefore Christ is called the Word of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). Christ is the Word in and by whom the triune God makes himself know to men, the personal enunciation of Jehovah (John 1:18)... (In the beginning was the Word) is a statement so full of meaning that I have no hope of expounding it.

- Christ is called the Word because he is the Wisdom of God.
- He is called the word because he is the Person spoken of in all the Old Testament prophecies and the sum of all the promises.
- Our Redeemer is called the Word because he is the Speaker, the Revealer and the Interpreter of the Father's will.

· And he is called the Word because he is the Image of the invisible God, the Offspring of the Father's mind, the Express Image of his Person, just as our words (if honestly spoken) are the express image of our minds. ([Sermon on Jn 1:1](#))

Herbert Lockyer - Christ is co-equal with God in the duration of His existence. The six initial words, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1), are a peculiar form of expression, and probably convey "the most exact and historical thought of Eternity found in the Bible." It is a phrase that has no reference to either date or epoch. In the opening of his first epistle, John has the phrase, "From the beginning" (1 John 1:1), but this refers to a specific event—the appearance of Christ as the God-Man to take away sin. Genesis has the majestic opening, "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1), which is linked on to His creative work for man. But John elevates the three words, "In the beginning" from any reference to time, which began for man at the Creation, and directs us to Christ's absolute preexistence before the Creation which John mentions in the third verse. It is interesting to contrast the phrases "**In the beginning**" and "**From the beginning**." The latter is common to John's writings and has in it no thought of eternal preexistence. See John 8:44; 1John 2:7, 24; 3:8. **Was** (past tense) indicates that Christ was already preexistent. He gave Himself the title, "I am the beginning (Revelation 1.8), and He is the Beginning who had no beginning. Moses, in his grand opening of Scripture, "**In the beginning God**," strikes the chord to descend the stream of time. John strikes it to look out on the expanse of eternity lying beyond created things but which in the Word was already existing. Christ came as The King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible." Further evidence of His preexistence can be found in statements like, "All things were made by him" (John 1:3), and "He is before all things" (Colossians 1:17). If all things were made by Him, He must have been before them. Christ is associated with Creation. In Genesis Creation is undoubtedly ascribed to God—"God said," "God made," "God created" (Genesis 1:3, 7, 21), but John ascribes the calling of a world from nought to the Word of God, that is, to Christ. To have attributed the work of God to Him would have been blasphemy had Christ not been one with God. Thus, His relation to the mutual universe is a proof of His preexistence and Deity. But He had an existence prior to any created thing, and was therefore, the Beginning of the beginning of Genesis 1:1. As Milligan and Moulton express it—

"In Genesis 1:1 the sacred historian starts from the beginning and comes downward, thus keeping us in the course of time. Here (John 1:1) John starts from the same point, but goes upward, thus taking us into the Eternity preceding time."

Other books of the Bible may begin in time, John begins in eternity, and directs our gaze to the equality of the Son with the Eternal Father. Our finite mind staggers at the revelation of the expanse of an eternity lying beyond created things, and all that we can do is to humbly accept by faith the preexistence of the Word, and worship and adore Him as the Eternal One. See John 17:5; Ephesians 1:4.

We now come to an understanding of preexistent Christ as the Word—one of the most picturesque names used of Him in Scripture. As the spoken word reveals our invisible thought, so Christ, as the Living Word, reveals the invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Vincent comments that this designation The Word is "the key-note and theme of the entire gospel, and that the original, LOGOS, implies a collecting or collection both of things in the mind, and of the words by which they are expressed. It therefore signifies both the outward form by which the inward thought is expressed, and the inward thought itself, the Latin oratio and ratio: compare the Italian ragionare—'to think' and 'to speak.'"

In all probability, John had in mind the beginning of Scripture where the act of creation was effected by God's speaking. "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6 ASV). See Job 26:13. Godet draws attention to the fact that—

"Eight times in the Genesis narrative of Creation there occurs, like the refrain of a hymn, the words, And God said. John gathers up all those sayings of God into a single saying, living and endowed with activity and intelligence, from all which all divine orders emanate; he finds as the basis of all spoken words, The Speaking Word."

As the Word, Jesus came as the embodiment of the divine will, and the personification of divine Wisdom (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 8:9). Ancient Jewish teachers designated the permanent agent of Jehovah (Genesis 16:7-13), by the name Memra (which means Word) of Jehovah. They would substitute the name the Word of Jehovah for that of Jehovah, each time that God manifested Himself. They thus paraphrased, "Je-hovah was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:21 ASV), as "The Memra was with Joseph." In like manner the Memra is the angel that destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, and it was the Memra that led the Israelites in the cloudy pillar. Early philosophers called the mediating principle between God and matter, the divine Reason, the Logos. But, John, inspired by the Spirit, set forth his Logos as a Person, with a consciousness of personal distinction, and not as The Imperial Reason." To the apostle, the Messiah was the Word—the Living Word—uniting Himself with humanity, and clothing Himself with a human body in order to save a lost world.

As the Greek Logos for the English Word carries the double idea of thought and speech, John declares that Jesus, as the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14), became the Revealer of the hidden thought of God, and the organ of all His manifestations to the world (Hebrews 1:3). While a word is an inward conception of the mind, it needs a voice to make it known, and John the Baptist said that

he was such a voice giving expression to the inner conception of divine truth (Luke 3:4). May our voice ever ring true, uttering words the Holy Spirit reveals of Him who is "The Word"! ([All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible](#))

(2) THE WORD ENJOYED ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER

The Word was with God (*logos he pros ton theon*) - One could accurately paraphrase this as "the Word was [being] intimately before God." In other words John is saying there is more than one person in the Godhead! And picture is of the Word facing God. The Son was continually "inclined toward" the Father. The Son was forever face to face with the Father. The picture simply, but profoundly paints the picture that the Father and the Son enjoyed **intimate fellowship** with each other **throughout eternity**, being continually "face-to-face" as it were! The implication is clear that the Father had fellowship with a Person, not a philosophical principle (given that Logos could have a very abstract sense in Greek). This pre-existent Word was distinct from the Father, not in essence, but in Person.

In Jn 1:18 we see another allusion to this intimacy, John writing "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God **Who is in the bosom of the Father**, He has explained [Him.]" The phrase "in the bosom" clearly speaks of intimacy and communion between the Father and the Son. Jesus Himself describes this intimate communion in Jn 17:5.

John Phillips comments on the plurality of God that John introduces - The Old Testament writers caught glimpses of this. In the great Jewish credal statement found in Deuteronomy 6:4, the Hebrews expressed the unity of God: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." But the very first sentence in the Bible expressed the idea of plurality in the godhead: "In the beginning God [Elohim, a plural noun] created [a singular verb] the heaven and the earth." This usage is consistent throughout the Old Testament; God is referred to in a plural form accompanied by a singular verb. Thus, embedded in the Old Testament is the idea of the trinity: one God, three persons. Expressed mathematically this would not be 1 + 1 + 1 (which equals three), but 1 x 1 x 1 (which equals one). From both Old and New Testaments we arrive at the concept of God existing as three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Three persons, one God." (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

Related Resource - [What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?](#)

William MacDonald concludes from the phrase **the Word was with God** that the **Word** (Jesus) "had a separate and distinct personality. He was not just an idea, a thought, or some vague kind of example, but a real Person who lived with God." ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Macleod - The Word, then, was "**with God.**" He was distinct from God, He had a personal relationship with God, and He was at home with God. All of this would be startling and new for John's listeners and readers. They had thought of earlier descriptions of the Word as personifications, that is, no more than a literary device. Now they must recognize that John was asserting the actual personal existence of the Word. ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

Milne on **with God** - It certainly makes clear the distinct existence of the Word with respect to God. The Word is no mere 'emanation from God' as in much first-century thinking. ([Ibid](#))

Alexander Maclaren - The second clause of John 1:1 asserts the eternal communion of the Word with God. The preposition employed means accurately 'towards,' and expresses the thought that in the Word there was motion or tendency towards, and not merely association with, God. It points to reciprocal, conscious communion, and the active going out of love in the direction of God. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

John Trapp says this phrase "sweetly sets forth his co-eternity and co-existency with the Father."

Hebert Lockyer on **with God** - A suggestive rendering of the phrase before us is, The Word was towards God." "Face to face" is the idea in the Greek, and is significant of fellowship with, and delight in God, the personality of the Son attracted by the personality of the Father, as some flowers are attracted by the sun.

F. B. Meyer on with God - The preposition **with** means communion with and movement towards. It denotes the intimate fellowship subsisting between two, and well befits the intercourse of the distinct Persons of the one and ever-blessed God. The face of the everlasting Word was ever directed towards the face of the everlasting Father.' He was in the bosom of the Father. 'He makes the Divine glory shine outwardly because He is filled inwardly. (Ed: Cf use of **apaugasma** in Heb 1:3) He contemplates before He reflects. He receives before He gives'... Let us not forget that He is our **Savior**, and our familiar Friend, and a distinct personality, Who was before all worlds, and will be unchanged for evermore."

With ([4314](#))(**pros**) is a preposition which properly speaks of motion towards to "interface with" (literally, moving toward a goal or

destination). In Jn 1:1 **pros** indicates place or accompaniment, but also disposition and orientation.

Kostenberger commenting on John's use of **pros** adds that "What is expressed is "not simple co-existence, but rather the idea of active relationship or intercourse 'with' " (Pollard). In terms of relationship, not only does **pros** establish a relationship between God and the Word, but also it distinguishes the two from each other.

Vincent notes that "The preposition **pros**, with the accusative case (as in Eph 3:14), denotes motion towards, or direction and is also often used in the New Testament in the sense of with; and that not merely as being near or beside, but as a living union and communion; implying the active notion of intercourse.

W Robert Cook explains that the preposition **pros** gives us "the picture of two personal beings facing one another and engaging in intelligent discourse." (The Theology of John)

John uses this same preposition **pros** a similar phrase in his first epistle writing that "and the life (Jesus, God incarnate) was manifested, and we have (1) seen and (2) bear witness and (3) proclaim to you the eternal life, which **was with the Father** (*pros ton patera*) and was manifested to us." (1John 1:2-note)

In light of this grand truth that the Son and the Father enjoyed eternal intimacy with each other, it is even more amazing to ponder Paul's great "kenosis" (emptying) passage in Philippians in which the Word, Christ "although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2:6-8)

As **Charles Wesley** so aptly put it in rhyme in one of my favorite hymns "[And Can It Be That I Should Gain?](#)"

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.

Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

John is saying that the Word (Jesus) has enjoyed eternal fellowship with the Father. In fact the Greek phrase can literally be translated "face-to-face with God." John declares the "closest possible fellowship with the Father, and that He took supreme delight in this communion" (Hendriksen). Thus, Christ had perfect fellowship with His Father in eternity past.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 17:5 "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

John 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world."

Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,
From everlasting was the Word:
With God he was; the Word was God,
And must divinely be adored.
--Isaac Watts

Fortner - John is declaring the eternal existence of the Word with the Father, his relation and nearness to him, his equality with him, and particularly the distinction of the Word from the Father. He was always with him, and is with him, and ever will be with him. From all eternity there was an intimate and ineffable union between the first and second Persons in the blessed **Trinity**, — between Christ the Word, and God the Father. John seems to be emphasizing, not just the eternity of the Word and the eternal union of the Father

and the Son, but the eternal communion of the Divine Persons. The preposition "with," is a preposition of direction and means "toward," or "face to face with," suggesting both equality and agreement. The phrase might be translated, "and the Word was toward God." It expresses the idea of motion. ([Sermon on Jn 1:1](#))

John Bunyan penned the following rapturous words "O Thou Son of the Blessed! Grace stripped Thee of thy glory. Grace brought Thee down from heaven. Grace made Thee bear such burdens of sin, such burdens of curse as are unspeakable. Grace was in Thy heart. Grace came bubbling up from Thy bleeding side. Grace was in Thy tears. Grace was in Thy prayers. Grace streamed from Thy thorn-crowned brow! Grace came forth with the nails that pierced Thee, with the thorns that pricked Thee! Oh, here are unsearchable riches of grace! Grace to make sinners happy! Grace to make angels wonder! Grace to make devils astonished!"

William Barclay - John goes on to say that **the Word was with God**. What does he mean by that? He means that always there has been the closest connection between the word and God. Let us put that in another and a simpler way—there has always been the most intimate connection between Jesus and God. That means no one can tell us what God is like, what God's will is for us, what God's love and heart and mind are like, as Jesus can.

Let us take a simple human analogy. If we want to know what someone really thinks and feels about something, and if we are unable to approach the person ourselves, we do not go to someone who is merely an acquaintance of that person, to someone who has known him only a short time; we go to someone whom we know to be an intimate friend of many years' standing. We know that he will really be able to interpret the mind and the heart of the other person to us.

It is something like that that John is saying about Jesus. He is saying that Jesus has always been with God. Let us use every human language because it is the only language we can use. John is saying that Jesus is so intimate with God that God has no secrets from him; and that, therefore, Jesus is the one person in all the universe who can reveal to us what God is like and how God feels towards us ([John Commentary- Daily Study Bible](#))

(3) THE WORD WAS ETERNALLY GOD

The Word was God - "And the Word was [being] God." He always was God! This statement could not be much clearer! In fact these four Greek words (*theos en ho logos*) may be the clearest declaration of the Godhood of Jesus Christ in all of holy writ! **As an aside, given the profundity of this simple verse in English, surely it would be a passage every saint would want to treasure as precious gold in their heart!**

John Phillips - That is, in His essence, in what He actually is, in His nature, person, and personality, in His attributes and character, Jesus is all that God is. All the essential characteristics of deity are His. He exists in His own right, independent of all creation. Does God have the wisdom and power to create a hundred million galaxies and hold them whirling through space at enormous velocities on inconceivable paths, according to fixed laws, expending prodigious amounts of energy? So does Jesus. Such is the Lord's ineffable person. (BORROW [Exploring the Gospel of John](#))

The Jehovah's Witnesses mistranslate this verse in their 2013 revised "**New World Translation**" - "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was **a god**." ([Online perversion](#)) This cult brazenly and falsely calls the **Word** or Jesus **a god** with a little "g." If Jesus was not God with a capital "**G**" then all of mankind is still dead in its trespasses and sins, for a little "g" god cannot effect redemption. Only the God-Man can fulfill the requirements of a Kinsman-Redeemer! ([See refutation of the Jehovah Witnesses' blatant mistranslation on John 1:1](#))

Herbert Lockyer says "What a tremendous phrase this is—The Word was God! Language has no meaning if these four words do not clearly teach that Christ is "Very God of Very God."... He was not only a divine person, but the Source and Spring of all that is divine. He is not merely of God, and with God, He is God, and His Deity is one of the great themes of John's gospel. "My Father and I are one" (John 10:30)—they were one in substance and essence, and therefore the Son is to be worshipped with the same worship as is due the Father."... It is not said that He is the God, for such an assertion would ascribe to a Son "the totality of the Divine Being, and contradict the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. And He is not said to be Divine, which would lessen the emphasis. But He is said, distinctly and emphatically, to be God—"God manifest in flesh."... Christ, then, came not as a Word of God, but the Word—the only revelation of God to man, and He declared all God had to say to men. In Creation, He was the expression of divine power, but in His Incarnation He became the revelation of the divine character (Matthew 11:27; John 17:26)... May He, as the Word, dwell in us richly in all wisdom (Colossians 3:16)! He is the Word, cleansing from sin, and if hid in our heart, will keep us clean (Psalm 119:9-11).

**'Tis the Father's pleasure
We should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning**

Was the Mighty Word.

R Kent Hughes - The exact meaning is that the Word was God in essence and character. He was God in every way, though he was a separate person from God the Father. The phrase perfectly preserves Jesus' separate identity, while also stating that he is God. This was his continuing identity from all eternity. He was God constantly. (Preaching the Word)

John Trapp - This whole Gospel is a continue demonstration of Christ's Deity, which began to be denied, while this evangelist lived, by Ebion, Cerinthus, and other odious antichrists.

Alexander Maclaren - The last clause asserts the community of essence, which is not inconsistent with distinction of persons, and makes the communion of active Love possible; for none could, in the depths of eternity, dwell with and perfectly love and be loved by God, except one who Himself was God. John 1:1 stands apart as revealing the pretemporal and essential nature of the Word. In it the deep ocean of the divine nature is partially disclosed, though no created eye can either plunge to discern its depths or travel beyond our horizon to its boundless, shoreless extent. The remainder of the passage deals with the majestic march of the self-revealing Word through creation, and illumination of humanity, up to the climax in the Incarnation. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

Spurgeon - I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in his eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In his glory he was "with God." In his nature he "was God."

Come, Thou Incarnate Word,
Gird on Thy mighty sword;
Our prayer attend:
Come, and Thy people bless,
And give Thy Word success,
Spirit of Holiness,
On us descend!

Compare

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (the Word), Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 20:28 Thomas answered and said to Him (the Word), "My Lord and my God (kai o theos mou)!"

Jn 10:30 "I and the Father are one."

Jn 14:9 Jesus *said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Alistair Begg on this great statement by John - "This is not theological lumber. This is not post-graduate theology for eggheads. This is the heart of historic Christianity."

Again John uses the **imperfect tense** for the verb **was** and again this indicates eternal existence. In the original Greek, it is notable that the word for God (Theos) has no preceding article (so-called "anarthrous") "some argue that it is an indefinite noun and mistranslate the phrase, "the Word was *divine*" (i.e., merely possessing some of the qualities of God) or, even more appalling, "the Word was *a* god." (MacArthur). (Bold and italics added)

Barry Horner - Jesus Christ has the same "essence" or "nature" as God, though being a distinct person, separate from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has the same attributes as God, yet he is distinct from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Barrett wrote, "John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous."

Bruce Milne - New Testament Greek has a perfectly usable word for 'divine', theios, which appears elsewhere in the New Testament. John chooses not to use it. His point is that there is no distinction in essence between God and the Word (or between the Father and the Son). Both are equal in Godhead and therefore equally to be honoured, adored and worshipped; and he says it straightforwardly, the Word was God. 'When John says "the Word was God", this must be understood in the light of Jewish pride in monotheism. Even though this writer regarded monotheism as a central tenet in his religion, he yet could not withhold from the Word the designation "God"... By putting the relationship thus, John is also avoiding the error of a complete identification of the two persons. To quote Tasker, 'the Word does not by himself make up the entire Godhead', i.e. there is more to the Godhead than either

the Father, or the Son. We need great care in using 'more' here since, as Augustine taught centuries ago, 'no two persons are greater than any one person'; i.e. the Father plus the Son is not greater in deity than the Father alone, or than the Son alone, since both, and both together with the Spirit, are one Godhead. At this point we confront the profound mystery of the [Trinity](#) and apprehension moves imperceptibly (but delightedly) into adoration. ([Ibid](#))

The **Word was** fully divine for John states emphatically, **"the Word was God"** (more literally, "God was the Word"). Christ has always been and will always be divine even from His birth (He did not *become* the Son of God - He *was already* the Son of God). Furthermore, Jesus was fully divine throughout His life and at His death and His resurrection. In other words even though He became a Man, He never ceased being the Son of God. He never ceased being God.

Here are parallel passages:

Phil 2:6-note Who, although **He existed in the form of God**, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Col 1:15-note And **He is the image of the invisible God**, the first-born (**prototokos**) of all creation.

Col 2:9-note For in Him **all the fulness (pleroma) of Deity dwells (katoikeo in the present tense = continually) in bodily form**,

Heb 1:3-note And He (Jesus) is the **radiance (apaugasma)** of His (Father's) glory (**doxa**) and the **exact representation (charakter)** of His (the Father's) nature...

Don Fortner makes an interesting observation that "With this one sentence John sweeps away and abolishes every heresy by which Satan has harassed the Church of God from its beginning.

· [Arianism](#) - which asserts that Christ is a Being inferior to God.

· [Sabellianism \(Modalism\)](#) -, which denies the distinction of Persons in the [Trinity](#), and says that God sometimes manifested himself as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit.

· [Socinianism](#) Unitarianism, which declares that Jesus Christ was not God at all, but mere man, a good and great man, but only a man.

· [Arminianism](#) which declares God to be changeable as one whose love, will, purpose and grace are all subject to the will of man! ([Sermon on Jn 1:1](#))

In light of the truth of John 1:1 (Really Jn 1:1-5) we are called to worship Jesus without cessation. We are called to obey Him without hesitation. We are called to love Him without reservation. And we are called to serve Him without interruption.

C T Studd understood John 1:1-5 when he said "If Jesus Christ is God and die for me, then no sacrifice that I could ever make for Him, could ever be too great."

John MacArthur addresses the cults like Jehovah's Witnesses misinterpret this passage noting that "heretical groups almost from the moment John penned these words have twisted their meaning to support their false doctrines concerning the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. Noting that theos (God) is anarthrous (not preceded by the definite article), some argue that it is an indefinite noun and mistranslate the phrase, "the Word was divine" (i.e., merely possessing some of the qualities of God) or, even more appalling, "the Word was a god." The absence of the article before theos, however, does not make it indefinite. Logos (Word) has the definite article to show that it is the subject of the sentence (since it is in the same case as theos). Thus the rendering "God was the Word" is invalid, because "the Word," not "God," is the subject. It would also be theologically incorrect, because it would equate the Father ("God" whom the Word was with in the preceding clause) with the Word, thus denying that the two are separate persons. The predicate nominative (God) describes the nature of the Word, showing that He is of the same essence as the Father (cf. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Toronto: MacMillan, 1957], 139–40; A. T. Robertson, *The Minister and His Greek New Testament* [Reprint: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978], 67–68). According to the rules of Greek grammar, when the predicate nominative (God in this clause) precedes the verb, it cannot be considered indefinite (and thus translated "a god" instead of God) merely because it does not have the article. That the term God is definite and refers to the true God is obvious for several reasons. First, theos appears without the definite article four other times in the immediate context (Jn 1:6, 12, 13, 18; cf. Jn 3:2, 21; 9:16; Matt. 5:9). Not even the Jehovah's Witnesses' distorted translation of the Bible renders the anarthrous theos "a god" in those verses. Second, if John's meaning was that the Word was divine, or a god, there were ways he could have phrased it to make that unmistakably clear. For example, if he meant to say that the Word was merely in some sense divine, he could have used the adjective [theios](#) (cf. 2Peter 1:4-note). It must be remembered that, as Robert L. Reymond notes, "No standard Greek lexicon offers 'divine' as one of the meanings of theos, nor does the noun become an adjective when it 'sheds' its article" (Jesus, Divine Messiah [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presb. & Ref., 1990], 303). Or if he had wanted to say that the Word was a god, he could have

written *ho logos ēn theos*. If John had written *ho theos ēn ho logos*, the two nouns (*theos* and *logos*) would be interchangeable, and God and the Word would be identical. That would have meant that the Father was the Word, which, as noted above, would deny the [Trinity](#). But as Leon Morris asks rhetorically, "How else [other than *theos ēn ho logos*] in Greek would one say, 'the Word was God'?" (The Gospel According to John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 77 n. 15). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John chose the precise wording that accurately conveys the true nature of the Word, Jesus Christ. "By *theos* without the article, John neither indicates, on the one hand, identity of Person with the Father; nor yet, on the other, any lower nature than that of God Himself" (H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of John* [Reprint; Winona Lake, Ind.: Alpha, 1979], 48). ([John 1-11 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#)) (See also sermon [Why Does John Refer to Jesus as -the Word?](#))

Macleod refers to James M Boice's four reasons why it matters that Jesus Christ is God. ([The Eternality and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

First, it means that believers know what God is like. Is He the god of the philosophers like Plato and Immanuel Kant, the god of the mystics, or the god of new-age pantheism or panentheism? Or is He the God of the Bible? If Jesus Christ is God, then people can know what God is like. To know Jesus Christ is to know God, for Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). If one wants to know what God is like, he should study the life and teachings of Christ in the Bible.

Second, it means that God was always like Jesus. Many have concluded that there is a great difference between the Lord Jesus and the God of the Old Testament. A little girl who was raised under the preaching of a liberal pastor was reading in the Old Testament a bloody story of the defeat of Israel's enemies. Surely it was wrong for God to order that, she surmised. "Well," she concluded, "that happened before God became a Christian!"

If the Word was with God before time began and if God's Word is part of the eternal scheme of things, it means that God was always like Jesus. Sometimes people tend to think of God as stern and avenging and that Jesus changed God's anger into love and altered His attitude toward the human race. The New Testament knows nothing of that idea. Does God the Father hate sin? Yes! Christ has always hated sin also. Does God the Father love sinners? Yes! Therefore Christ loves them also.

Third, the truth that Jesus Christ is God means that His death for sin is of infinite value. His death is the only acceptable and sufficient sacrifice for sin. Because He is human and sinless, His sacrifice is appropriate and acceptable, and because He is God, His sacrifice is infinite in value.

Fourth, because Jesus Christ is God, it means that He is able to satisfy all the needs of the human heart. In Ephesians 3:18-19 Paul prayed that believers "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." During the Napoleonic wars in Europe some of the emperor's soldiers opened a prison that had been used by the Spanish Inquisition. In one of the many dungeons they found the skeleton of a prisoner chained to the wall. On the wall, carved into the stone with a sharp piece of metal was a crude cross. And around the cross were the Spanish words for the four dimensions in Ephesians 3:18-19. On one side was the word "breadth," and on the other side was the word "length," above was the word "height," and below was the word "depth." Left to rot away in chains, this persecuted believer comforted himself with the thought that God was able to satisfy every spiritual need of his heart. ([The Eternality and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

Ray Stedman - So when John introduces his gospel he wants us to understand this: that the One he is going to talk about, this amazing man from Nazareth, is God himself somehow become a Man. He is the Creator become part of his creation, the Originator of life and of wisdom who somehow limited himself to learning as a little child, growing and partaking with us in the search for truth, and, at last, manifesting the fullness of it in his resurrected power. This is the One who is at the center of our faith. That is why we cannot forget Jesus. **Every human being sooner or later must deal with Jesus of Nazareth. He is the ultimate crisis in every human life.** ([Who is Jesus](#))

Steven Cole - Whenever Scripture makes such a bold declaration of Jesus' deity, you can be sure that the enemy will attack it. Virtually all heresies down through history to the present deny either the full deity or the true humanity of Jesus Christ. The heretic Arius and his modern disciples, the Jehovah's Witnesses, argue that Jesus was not eternal; rather, He was the first created being. The Jehovah's Witnesses base this in part on Paul's statement (Col. 1:15), "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." But if they would read the very next verse, Paul explains what he means by "the firstborn" (Jn 1:16-17): "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether throne or dominions or rulers or authorities-all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." If all things have been created through Him, then clearly He is not created. He is eternal. In our text, John emphasizes the same thing (Jn 1:3), "apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Obviously, if Jesus is a created being, then He came into being and verse 3 is false. But John denies this and asserts that everything that had a beginning (that came into being) came into being through Jesus. He is eternal. There never was a time when the Word was not in existence. Jesus is eternal God! ([John 1:1-5 Jesus:](#)

[Revealer of God](#)

If Jesus Christ shares the nature of God, we are called
to worship Him without cessation,
obey Him without hesitation,
love Him without reservation and
serve Him without interruption.
To Him be all glory for ever - Milne

Bruce Milne summarizes John 1:1 - What does this tremendous opening verse imply for our approach to Jesus Christ?

1. The finality of Christ. Jesus' place in the being of God is changeless. For evermore he is the Son in and with the Father, and hence the one in whom God is made known to us. In our time pluralism is increasingly the order of the day. This has arisen partly as political and community leaders, struggling with nations and societies torn apart by religious division, attempt to achieve a new social concord through affording equal status to the various world faiths. In addition the communications revolution has made it increasingly difficult to maintain isolation, and religious intolerance appears in many eyes as almost the ultimate form of sin. Due to these developments Christians come under considerable pressure at times to water down the great historic distinctives of the Christian faith, such as the deity of Christ. Certainly bigotry is never to be encouraged, and respect for those of other persuasions is always appropriate, but we cannot compromise the uniqueness of the revelation of Jesus Christ merely for the sake of an often vague communal harmony. He alone is God come to us. No other can stand alongside him or take his place. The revelation in Jesus Christ is the final revelation. In acknowledging him lies the seeds of true community.

2. The mystery of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ is one with God in his being, he shares in the infinity and limitlessness of God. This does not mean we cannot claim to know him, or assert certain final truths about him, but it means that we do not have an exhaustive knowledge of him. This is John's concern as his gospel closes (cf. Jn 20:30; 21:25) and it is implicit from the very first verse. We therefore know him, and yet there is always more to know, more to experience. This is why worship is fundamental to understanding, and why love and knowledge are inseparable.

3. The centrality of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is God himself come to us, he must always be in the centre of our approach to God, our thinking about God, and our relating to God (Jn 14:6).

4. The supremacy of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ shares the nature of God, we are called to worship Him *without cessation*, obey Him *without hesitation*, love Him *without reservation* and serve Him *without interruption*. To Him be all glory for ever. ([bid](#))

JESUS IS GOD THE EGO EIMI

The argument of skeptics one often hears is that Jesus never claimed to be God. **Let's look at several instances where Jesus clearly claimed to be God.** Specifically, let's look His claim to be **"I Am"** which is known affectionately in Greek as the **"Ego Eimi"** (Spell it out for them). **Ego** of course is "I" and **eimi** is the simple verb meaning "to be" and is the usual word for existence. **Eimi** is in the present tense and so what Jesus is saying is "I continually exist." In fact the idea is that when Jesus used this description He was saying in essence "I am eternally self-existent!"

And so for example in John 8:58 (addressing a group of Jews who had supposedly "believed" in Him earlier in John 8:30), He declared "Truly, truly (Amen, Amen), I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am (ego eimi) He (where "He" is not in the Greek but added by the translators. More literally He said "I Am")." And guess what response He solicited from this group of Jews? John records in Jn 8:59 **"Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him**, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple."

Why did this group of Jews who had professed belief in Jesus some 28 verses earlier now seek to stone Him to death? To answer that question let's turn to Exodus 3 which is Moses' famous "Burning Bush encounter" where God is giving him instructions to go and rescue His chosen people Israel from bondage in Egypt, to which Moses responds in Exodus 3:13 "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His Name?' What shall I say to them?" to which "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" In the Greek translation (known as the **Septuagint**) of God's Name "I Am who I Am" find the phrase "EGO EIMI." So when Jesus declared He was "EGO EIMI" the Jews clearly understood that He was saying that He was God and thus they sought to stone Him for blasphemy because they did not believe Him to be God.

We see Jesus make a similar claim in John 8:24 declaring to the Jews"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM (again the translators add "He" but it is not in the Greek text), you will die in your sins." So what is Jesus' claiming? That He is God and He is clearly implying that belief in Him will mean that a person does not have to die in their sins! Who do you say that Jesus is? Do you believe in His Name, "Ego Eimi." If you do, you will never see the Second Death described by John at the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.

In fact, the moment you believe in the Name of **Jesus the great "I Am"** you will immediately enter into ETERNAL LIFE... NOW, not after you die! And remember Jesus' promise of LIFE does not just describe the **"quantity"** of life (eternal), but He also offers us a new **"quality"** of life. Today. Right now. Not just in eternity future! The godless world is striving desperately to achieve *a better quality of life*. Jesus is saying in essence **cease striving and know that I am God** (Ps 46:10) and I will give you the **BEST** quality of life! In fact in John 10:10 Jesus even trumps Himself declaring **I will give you life and give it abundantly**. Beloved, a better offer has never been made to anyone. **So you read through the Gospel of John seek to lay hold of that abundant life which is yours in His Name.**

And let us tell others about Jesus offer of the "BEST QUALITY OF LIFE" remembering that as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, we are simply to boldly, confidently tell them about Jesus and leave the results to God. John describes the two reactions we can expect in John 1:11-13 writing that "Jesus came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name (notice that believe explains "receive" so here receive Jesus is to believe in Jesus), who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, BUT OF GOD." As the psalmist says "Salvation belongs to the Lord." (Psalm 3:8) Paul says that when offer the Good News about Jesus we are to leave the results to God and that takes the pressure off us to think we have to have a perfect presentation or they will never believe. Paul counters that natural way of thinking reminding us that the **"Gospel is the power (dunamis) of God for salvation to everyone who believes."** (Ro 1:16-note). Who's power? God's. Filled with the Spirit, we are to boldly tell others of the Name of Jesus, but it is God Who saves them in Jesus' Name.

In his classic book **"More Than a Carpenter"** Josh McDowell says that Jesus is either **"Lord, Liar or Lunatic?"** (*As an aside when we post this sermon transcript on the Antioch website, we will give you a link to an online version of this simple but well done apologetic resource that can be read in less than 3 hours and equip you to be able to share your faith without fear*). But Jesus clearly claimed to be God and did not leave any other option open. He either LIED about it, was OUT OF HIS MIND or He is LORD of all.

Josh McDowell - Was He Lord? I cannot personally conclude that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic. The only other alternative is that he was the Christ, the Son of God, as he claimed. When I discuss this with most Jewish people, it's interesting how they respond. They usually tell me that Jesus was a moral, upright, religious leader, a good man, or some kind of prophet. I then share with them the claims Jesus made about himself and then the material in this chapter on the tri-lemma (liar, lunatic, or Lord). When I ask if they believe Jesus was a liar, there is a sharp "No!" Then I ask, "Do you believe he was a lunatic?" The reply is "Of course not." "Do you believe he is God?" Before I can get a breath in edgewise, there is a resounding "Absolutely not." Yet one has only so many choices. The issue with these three alternatives is not which is possible, for it is obvious that all three are possible. But rather, the question is "Which is more probable?" Who you decide Jesus Christ is must not be an idle intellectual exercise. You cannot put him on the shelf as a great moral teacher. That is not a valid option. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord and God. You must make a choice. "But," as the Apostle John wrote, "these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and"—more important—"that believing you might have life in His name" (John 20:31). The evidence is clearly in favor of Jesus as Lord. Some people, however, reject this clear evidence because of moral implications involved. They don't want to face up to the responsibility or implications of calling him Lord. ([More Than a Carpenter](#))

ANSWERING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ON JOHN 1:1

Adrian Rogers relates the following story of his encounter with a Jehovah's Witness - I was in my yard working one day and a person came up and they were carrying a satchel, and they wanted to talk about the Bible. And religion. And I was happy to do that. And we talked a little bit. And I said by the way, I said tell me a little about yourself. I said oh where do you worship? And he said, oh we meet in thus and such a place. I said, well, tell me what do you call yourself? He said, well, I just, we just want to study the Bible. I said, no, I said, don't beat around the bush. Said, tell me, of course I already knew, but I said tell me. Who are you, what are you? Well, he said, I'm a Jehovah Witness, does that make any difference? **I said no, so am I. He said what? You're a Jehovah Witness? I said I surely am. I said you know, I'm going to tell you something else. I believe that Jesus is Jehovah. And Jesus said, ye shall be witness unto me (Acts 1:8). And I said I get no greater joy than to witness about Jesus, our**

Jehovah. (Walter Martin in his classic work "Kingdom of the Cults" has the following note which helps us understand why the conversation of Adrian Rogers and the JW came to an abrupt halt! Martin writes "Jehovah's Witnesses know beyond doubt that if Jesus is Jehovah God, every one of them is going to a flaming hereafter; and hell they fear above all else. This no doubt explains a great deal of their antagonism toward the doctrines of the Trinity and hell. The Witnesses, it must be remembered, consistently berate the Trinity doctrine as of the devil and never tire of proclaiming that the hell of the Bible is the grave. The thought of being punished in unquenchable fire for their disobedience to God is probably the strongest bond holding the Watchtower's flimsy covers together.")

Barry Horner writes "For those who have no knowledge of Greek, a simple rebuttal of the Jehovah's Witness runs as follows. The claim is made that the Greek here has no definite article or "the," so that "a god" is more literally correct. However there is no indefinite article or "a" in Greek! Nevertheless, enquire if a passage of Scripture that clearly addresses Jesus as "the God" were revealed, then would not Jesus' deity be established? Refer to John 20:28 where Thomas confesses Jesus to be, literally, "the Lord of me and the God of me," *ho kurios mou kai ho theos mou*, with the use of the definite article. **F. F. Bruce** has written: "Those people who emphasize that the true rendering of the last clause of John 1:1 is 'the word was a god,' prove nothing thereby save their ignorance of Greek grammar. "Those who know even some basic Greek will understand that the verb "to be" here takes a predicate nominative, so that the article with "Word" establishes the subject of the sentence. Thus John wants to declare that "the Word was God," and not that "God was the Word." ([John 1:1-18](#))

Notice how the **New World Translation** used by the Jehovah's Witnesses translates this phrase in John 1:1 "the Word was a god."

Gotquestions notes that "The New World Translation is unique in one thing – it is the first intentional, systematic effort at producing a complete version of the Bible that is edited and revised for the specific purpose of agreeing with a group's doctrine. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watchtower Society realized that their beliefs contradicted Scripture. So, rather than conforming their beliefs to Scripture, they altered Scripture to agree with their beliefs. The "New World Bible Translation Committee" went through the Bible and changed any Scripture that did not agree with Jehovah's Witness theology... The most well-known of all the New World Translation perversions is John 1:1. The original Greek text reads, "the Word was God." The NWT renders it as "the word was a god." This is not a matter of correct translation, but of reading one's preconceived theology into the text, rather than allowing the text to speak for itself. There is no indefinite article in Greek (in English, "a" or "an"), so any use of an indefinite article in English must be added by the translator. This is grammatically acceptable, so long as it does not change the meaning of the text.

There is a good reason why *theos* has no definite article in John 1:1 and why the New World Translation rendering is in error. There are three general rules we need to understand to see why.

1. In Greek, word order does not determine word usage like it does in English. In English, a sentence is structured according to word order: Subject - Verb - Object. Thus, "Harry called the dog" is not equivalent to "the dog called Harry." But in Greek, a word's function is determined by the case ending found attached to the word's root. There are two case endings for the root *theo*: one is -s (*theos*), the other is -n (*theon*). The -s ending normally identifies a noun as being the subject of a sentence, while the -n ending normally identifies a noun as the direct object.

2. When a noun functions as a predicate nominative (in English, a noun that follows a being verb such as "is"), its case ending must match the noun's case that it renames, so that the reader will know which noun it is defining. Therefore, *theo* must take the -s ending because it is renaming *logos*. Therefore, John 1:1 transliterates to "*kai theos en ho logos*." Is *theos* the subject, or is *logos*? Both have the -s ending. The answer is found in the next rule.

3. In cases where two nouns appear, and both take the same case ending, the author will often add the definite article to the word that is the subject in order to avoid confusion. John put the definite article on *logos* ("the Word") instead of on *theos*. So, *logos* is the subject, and *theos* is the predicate nominative. In English, this results in John 1:1 being read as "and the Word was God" (instead of "and God was the word").

The most revealing evidence of the Watchtower's bias is their inconsistent translation technique. Throughout the Gospel of John, the Greek word *theon* occurs without a definite article. The New World Translation renders none of these as "a god." Just three verses after John 1:1, the New World Translation translates another case of *theos* without the indefinite article as "God." Even more inconsistent, in John 1:18, the NWT translates the same term as both "God" and "god" in the very same sentence.

The Watchtower, therefore, has no hard textual grounds for their translation—only their own theological bias. While New World Translation defenders might succeed in showing that John 1:1 can be translated as they

have done, they cannot show that it is the proper translation. Nor can they explain the fact that that the NWT does not translate the same Greek phrases elsewhere in the Gospel of John the same way. It is only the pre-conceived heretical rejection of the deity of Christ that forces the Watchtower Society to inconsistently translate the Greek text, thus allowing their error to gain some semblance of legitimacy in the minds of those ignorant of the facts.

It is only the Watchtower's pre-conceived heretical beliefs that are behind the dishonest and inconsistent translation that is the New World Translation. The New World Translation is most definitely not a valid version of God's Word. There are minor differences among all the major English translations of the Bible. No English translation is perfect. However, while other Bible translators make minor mistakes in the rendering of the Hebrew and Greek text into English, the NWT intentionally changes the rendering of the text to conform to Jehovah's Witness theology. The New World Translation is a **perversion**, not a **version**, of the Bible." ([Is the New World Translation a valid version of the Bible?](#))

Macleod - Theos cannot be watered down as in the Jehovah's Witnesses translation "and the Word was a god." Members of that cult note that the word "God" is anarthrous (lacking the article) in the Greek text. Since John did not write "the God," they conclude he meant "a god." This translation, however, is erroneous for four reasons, as Harris points out.⁵³ First, a theological reason: If they took their own translation seriously, the Jehovah's Witnesses would believe in polytheism (i.e., more than one God). John's monotheism makes this rendering impossible. The Bible teaches there is one God (Deut. 6:4). A monotheist could apply the singular θεός ("God") only to the Supreme Being and not to an inferior divine being. **Second**, a literary reason: Elsewhere in John Jesus is called "God," and in one of those verses (John 20:28, "My Lord and my God") the article is used. The argument that John does not call Jesus "God" is therefore baseless. **Third**, a grammatical reason: In their discussion of John 1:1 the Jehovah's Witnesses betray their lack of understanding of Greek grammar. In the clause *kai theos en logos* the subject, although it follows the verb, is "the Word" (λόγος) because it has the article. The word "God" (θεός), which precedes the copulative verb *v*, is an anarthrous predicate nominative. In his analysis of predicate nouns in Mark and John, Harner concluded that "anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb may be primarily qualitative in force yet may also have some connotation of definiteness." Harner's paraphrase is to the point: "the Word had the same nature as God." **Fourth**, a grammatical-theological reason: If John had used the article before θεός in this clause he would have been writing, "The Son was the Father." But this would contradict the second clause of verse 1 in which he distinguished the λόγος from the Father. Sabellius, an early third-century A.D. heretic, denied the **Trinity**, the doctrine that three eternal persons coexist in the Godhead. Arguing that the Godhead has only one person, he said that "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" are different "modes" that the one person used in different eras. If John followed the view of the Jehovah's Witnesses, he would have been saying, like Sabellius, that the Son is the Father. ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1-1-2](#))

The following is from ex-Jehovah Witness **David Reed's** book which I recommend as an excellent guide for addressing their false teaching in specific Bible passages - BORROW [Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse by Verse](#) (See also David Reed's website for addition information - [AnswerJW.com](#))

John 1:1 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (ASV)

Until around 1950, Jehovah's Witnesses carried with them a copy of the American Standard Version of the Bible (because it features the name Jehovah throughout the Old Testament). But they faced the embarrassing problem of trying to deny the deity of Christ, while the very Bible they held in their hand said plainly that "the Word was God." This problem was solved when the Watchtower Society published its own New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

Now, when Christians refer JWs to John 1:1, the Witnesses can answer, "That's not in my Bible!" They can turn to John 1:1 in their own translation, and read "the Word was **a god**."

By reducing Jesus Christ to "**a god**," the Watchtower places him among the "many 'gods' and many 'lords' " of 1 Corinthians 8:5—on the same level as Satan, "the god of this system of things" (2Cor. 4:4, NWT).

The Watchtower Society presents the New World Translation as the anonymous work of the New World Bible Translation Committee—and resists all efforts to identify the members of the committee. They say they do this in order that all credit for the work will go to God. But an unbiased observer will quickly note that such anonymity also shields the translators from any blame for errors or distortions in their renderings. And it prevents scholars from checking their credentials. In fact, defectors who have quit Watchtower headquarters in recent years have identified the alleged members of the committee, revealing that none of them was expert in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic—the original languages from which the Bible must be translated.

For many years Jehovah's Witnesses turned for support of their "a god" rendering to The New Testament (1937) by Johannes Greber, since Greber also translated it as " ... the Word was a god." Watchtower Society

publications quote or cite Greber in support of this and other renderings, as follows:

Aid to Bible Understanding (1969), pages 1134 and 1669

“Make Sure of All Things—Hold Fast to What Is Fine” (1965), page 489

The Watchtower, 9/15/62, page 554

The Watchtower, 10/15/75, page 640

The Watchtower, 4/15/76, page 231

“The Word”—Who Is He? According to John (1962), page 5

However, after ex-Witnesses gave considerable publicity to the fact that Greber was a spiritist who claimed that spirits showed him what words to use in his translation, The Watchtower (4/1/83) said on page 31:

This translation was used occasionally in support of renderings of Matthew 27:52, 53 and John 1:1, as given in the New World Translation and other authoritative Bible versions. But as indicated in a foreword to the 1980 edition of The New Testament by Johannes Greber, this translator relied on “God’s Spirit World” to clarify for him how he should translate difficult passages. It is stated: “His wife, a medium of God’s Spirit world was often instrumental in conveying the correct answers from God’s Messengers to Pastor Greber.” The Watchtower has deemed it improper to make use of a translation that has such a close rapport with spiritism. (Deuteronomy 18:10–12) The scholarship that forms the basis for the rendering of the above-cited texts in the New World Translation is sound and for this reason does not depend at all on Greber’s translation for authority. Nothing is lost, therefore, by ceasing to use his New Testament.

Thus, it appeared that the Society had only just then discovered Greber’s spiritistic connections and immediately repented of using him for support. However, this, too, was yet another deception—because the JW organization already knew of Greber’s spiritism back in 1956. The Watchtower of February 15, 1956, contains nearly a full page devoted to warning readers against Johannes Greber and his translation. It refers to his book titled Communication with the Spirit-World: Its Laws and Its Purpose and states, “Very plainly the spirits in which ex-priest Greber believes helped him in his translation” (The Watchtower, 2/15/56, p. 111).

Aside from Greber’s New Testament and the Watchtower Society’s slanted version, other English-language Bible translations are nearly unanimous in rendering John 1:1 as “... the Word was God.” And this is consistent with the declaration by the apostle Thomas, also found in John’s Gospel, calling Jesus “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). The JW New World Translation still calls Jesus “God” in John 20:28 and Isaiah 9:6. In fact, their 1985 Kingdom Interlinear version reveals that the Greek literally says Jesus is “the God” (HO THEOS) in John 20:28.

Anyone who believes that the Father is God, while the Son is “a god” should read Isaiah 43 and 44, where the inspired Word dismisses such a notion: “Before Me no God was formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and beside Me there is no saviour... is there a god beside me? There is no other Rock; I know of none!” (Isa. 43:10–11; 44:8, MLB italics added).

ARNOLD FRUCHTENBAUM'S NOTES ON MEMRA

Arnold Fruchtenbaum has several notes on **Memra** and **Logos** - In Greek philosophy the meaning of Logos encompassed two concepts, the concept of reason and the concept of speech... His use of the “Word” is completely consistent with the Jewish concept of the “Memra” (Aramaic for “Word”) that rabbis taught in first century Israel. Their understanding was derived solely from a close study of Scripture, not Greek philosophy. John was not trying to promote Greek Hellenized philosophy, with a conception of creation and creator that was incompatible with scripture. Rather, John was using concepts of God that were being taught by the rabbis of Jesus’ day, and adding to these concepts based on God’s divine revelation... The Hebrew for Word is “**Davar/Dabar**.” The Aramaic for Word is “Memra.” The Greek for Word is “Logos.” The Gospel of John was written in Greek, so “Logos” is used. If it had been written in Hebrew it would have been “Davar.” If in Aramaic, “**Memra**.” Aramaic was the vernacular speech of Israel in Jesus’ day. Much of rabbinic writings were also in Aramaic, so we will develop the six things that the rabbis taught about the Word using their word for it, “**Memra**.” Within John 1:1-18 we can find all SIX of the concepts the rabbis were teaching in 1st century Israel. These six concepts about God are six truths about God that the rabbis could not always explain. Likewise these same concepts about God are embodied in Jesus, as they correlate to John’s statements about Jesus. Jesus is the Memra, or the Word. The Memra was Distinct from God, but the Same as God

- Read John 1:1-2.

- This was a paradox that the rabbis recognized, but were unable to explain.
- John will explain this paradox in the concept of the Tri-unity, or Trinity.
- Look up Isaiah 45:21-25. Observe the use of “I,” “Me,” “the Lord,” and “Him.” Isaiah 55:10-11, and Hebrews 4:12 are also good examples of this.

The Memra was the Agent of Creation

- Read John 1:3.
- God spoke, and creation came into existence.
- Everything that we see in this world exists because of the Memra, the Word.
- Look at Psalm 33:4-6, and Hebrews 11:3.

The Memra was the Agent of Salvation

- Read John 1:12.
- The Memra, visible to the nation of Israel as He led them through the desert in Exodus, saved them physically. Through the Memra (Jesus) is also spiritual salvation, through faith in His work on the cross.
- So whether physically in the Old Testament, or spiritually through Jesus’ work on the cross, the

Memra is the agent of salvation. Psalm 130:4-8.

- Those who receive the Memra (Jesus), are saved by the Memra.

The Memra is the Means by which God Takes on Visible Form

- Read John 1:14.
- In Christian theology, these visible manifestations are called a theophany.
- In rabbinic terms this is called the **Shekinah/Shechinah** (Hebrew). It is the visible manifestation of God’s glory, often seen as fire, cloud, or light.
- In John 1:14 the word “dwelt” in Greek is not the usual Greek word used for “dwelling,” but the Greek word used for “to tabernacle,” **skeno**.
- John is conveying a specific meaning about Jesus here.
- “Skeinei” is a derivation of the word “Shechinah,” but as there are no “sh” sounds in Greek it became skeinei. The very concept of the word was borrowed from the Hebrew concept. The Memra “tabernacled” among us.
- In the book of Ezekiel 8:1-11:25, we find the account of the Shechinah of the Lord departing from Israel.
- In the incarnation of Jesus, the Shechinah of the Lord had returned to earth, not in the form of light, fire or cloud but in the form of a man of flesh who tabernacled among us.
- Look at Mark:2-8.
- The physical body of Jesus veiled the brightness of His glory. Look up Hebrews 10:19-20. At the mount of transfiguration, three of Jesus’ apostles were allowed to see the Shechinah shine through Jesus’ flesh.
- John says “and we saw His glory” in John 1:14, which refers to this transfiguration which John beheld along with Peter and James.

The Memra is the Means by which God Signs His Covenants

- Read John 1:17.
- This verse is about God’s covenants.
- Throughout human history there have been eight covenants, three with humanity and five specifically with the Jewish people..

1. Edenic Covenant

2. Adamic Covenant
3. Noahic Covenant
4. Abrahamic Covenant
5. Mosaic Covenant - the Law, a conditional covenant with Israel.
6. Land Covenant
7. Davidic Covenant
8. New Covenant - prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-37.

- Read this passage, and note that this is a JEWISH COVENANT.
- The Mosaic Covenant of Exodus 24 was signed and sealed by the Shechinah, as was the Abrahamic in Genesis 15:17.
- The New Covenant was signed and sealed by Jesus' blood being shed on the cross, as described in Hebrews 8:1-10:25.
- Jesus (the Memra, the Word) signed and sealed the New Covenant when He lifted the cup of redemption at the last Passover, and said "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood," in Luke 22:20. See also 1 Corinthians 11:25.

The Memra is the Agent of Revelation

- Read John 1:18
- The Word, or Memra, is personified as a revealer.
- God revealed Himself when He gave His servants a Word from Him. This is the case when a passage begins with "the Word of the Lord came to..." of which there are many examples in the scriptures. If you do a phrase search on "the word of the Lord" you will find that it comes up well over 300 times in the scriptures.
- Read Hebrews 1:1-3.
- **Jesus = the Word = the Memra = Revealer of the Father.**
- This is one of the sub-themes we mentioned in the book of John, that Jesus came to reveal the Father to men.

Summary, four points

• So keeping in mind these SIX things that the rabbinic scholars of first century Israel were teaching about the Memra, or the Word, we can see that the purpose of John's prologue is not to show that Jesus came to fulfill the ideals of Greek philosophy. Instead John is showing the Church at large that Jesus existed before the world was created, that He was part of the Tri-unity of God, and that He came to fulfill the New Covenant promised in Scripture.

1. The Memra came in visible form, that of a human.
2. The world did not recognize Him.
3. His own Jewish people did not recognize Him.
4. Those who did recognize Him became children of Light.

• Where does the Shechinah light come into the scriptures in relation to believers in Jesus? The book of Acts, in the birth of the Church.

• Does this study "throw some light" on your understanding of this passage in John? The Jewish frame of reference is very valuable in understanding the Word of God.

• A Greek philosopher named [Heraclitus](#) first used the term Logos around 600 B.C. to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. Plato, and the Stoics adopted this philosophy. Stoicism began around 300 B.C. Their concept of the natural order of the universe did not include a personal God, but a distant and remote one who did not interact with humans. In their view, a creator had instituted a natural order within which humans had to exist harmoniously. To the Stoics logos meant the divine animating principle pervading the universe, or a rational divine power that encompassed the idea of nature and fate. It was much like the impersonal, rational energy known as "the force" in Star Wars.

- Greek logos was an “it,” and John’s logos is a “He.”
- Philo (a Jew who was a contemporary of Jesus) took it up and made it familiar to Jewish readers who were already used to the Hebrew concept of Memra. Philo used allegory to fuse and harmonize Greek philosophy and Judaism. Philo’s Logos is based on a Greek philosophy of reason, going back to Plato and Stoicism.
- **Later church fathers took Philo as their guide rather than Jewish theology.** Origen (200 A.D.) introduced allegorical interpretation of the scriptures to the church in an attempt to make Christianity more palatable to the Hellenized world. Allegorical interpretation has been the bane of both Judaism and Christianity, and can be traced back to these philosophical strains.

WILLIAM BARCLAY'S ANALYSIS OF THE "LOGOS"

LOGOS - THE WORD OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

THE word logos means word. The Fourth Gospel uses logos in a technical sense when it calls Jesus The Word; but before we come to that special usage we wish to study its ordinary usage in the NT. Naturally it is one of the commonest of all Greek words, but, common as it is, the more we study it, the more we shall see a wealth of meaning.

Ho logos, the word, becomes almost a synonym for the Christian message. Mark tells us that Jesus preached the **word** to the crowds (Mark 2.2). In the parable the seed that the sower sowed was the **word** (Mark 4.14). It was the work of Paul and his friends to preach the **word** (Acts 14.25). Most often this **word** is said to be the **word** of God (Luke 5.1; 11.28; John 10.35; Acts 4.31; 6.7; 13.44; I Cor. 14.36; Heb. 13.7). Sometimes it is the **word** of the Lord (I Thess. 4.15; II Thess. 3.1). And once it is the **word** of Christ (Col. 3.16). Now genitives in Greek can be either subjective or objective. If these **genitives** are subjective the phrases mean the **word** which God gave, the **word** which the Lord gave, and the **word** which Christ gave. If they are **objective**, they mean the **word** which tells about God, or about the Lord, or about Christ. In all probability both the subjective and the objective meanings are involved in these phrases. This means to say that the Christian message, the **logos**, the **word**, is something which came from God; it is not the discovery of man, but the gift of God; and it is something which tells about God, something which man could not have discovered for himself.

The very fact that the word **logos** is used for the Christian message is very significant. It means a spoken message, and therefore it means that the Christian message is not something which is learned from books, but something which is transmitted from person to person. Papias, the second-century Christian writer, says that he learned more from the living and abiding voice than from any book. The Christian message comes far more often through the living personality than through the printed or the written page.

This word, this **logos**, has certain functions.

(i) The **word** judges (John 12.48). An old catechism asks what will happen if the truths recounted in it are disregarded. Its answer is that condemnation will follow, and a condemnation all the greater because the reader has read this book. To have heard the truth is not only to have received a privilege; it is also to have had a responsibility laid upon us.

(ii) The **word** purifies (John 15.3; I Tim. 4.5). It purifies by exposing evil and by pointing to good. It rebukes that which is wrong and exhorts to that which is right. It purifies in the negative sense by seeking to eradicate old faults; and it purifies in the positive sense by exhorting to new virtues.

(iii) Through the **word** belief comes (Acts 4.4). No man can believe in the Christian message until he has heard the Christian message. The word is that which gives a man the opportunity to believe; and, having heard the word himself, there is laid upon him the duty of giving others the same chance to hear it, that they also may believe.

(iv) The **word** is the agent of rebirth (I Peter 1.23). One thing is true, as G. K. Chesterton said, 'Whatever man is, he is not what he was meant to be.' He has to be changed so radically that the change can only be called a new birth, and the word is the first agent in that tremendous re-creating change.

The study of the **word** logos becomes of primary importance when we study what the NT says we must do with this logos.

(i) The **logos** must be heard (Matt. 13.20; Acts 13.7; 13.44). The duty of listening is laid upon the Christian. Among the many voices of the world he must tune his ears to hear the message which is the message of God.

He will never give himself the opportunity to know unless he gives himself the opportunity to hear.

(ii) The **logos** must be received (Luke 8.13; James 1.21; Acts 8.14; 11.1; 17.11). There is a hearing which is a purely external thing. Either the tide of words flows over the hearer and his hearing leaves no effect upon him, or he listens and dismisses the whole matter as having nothing to do with him. The Christian message must not only be listened to, but must be taken into the heart and mind and inwardly digested.

(iii) The **logos** must be held on to (Luke 8.13). The Greeks described time by an adjective which means 'time which wipes all things out'. Any word can be heard, and for a time accepted, and then obliterated by the passage of time. The Christian message must be deliberately retained. It must be held in the forefront of the mind, thought about, meditated on, so that it is retained and not lost.

(iv) The **logos** is something to abide in (John 8.31). There is always a circle of thoughts and ideas in which a man lives and moves and has his being; in which he rests his life and by which he directs his activities. The Christian message must be the thing in which and by which a man lives.

(v) The **logos** must be kept (John 8.51; 14.23; I John 2.5; Rev. 3.8). It is a message which is not knowledge for the mind alone; it is direction for life. It issues not in speculation but in action. Its demand is obedience. It is not only a knowledge to think about; it is an ethic and a law to be obeyed.

(vi) The **logos** must be witnessed to (Acts 8.25; Rev. 1.2). It is something to which a man's whole life must bear witness. He can only prove that he has accepted it by living it. It is something which in any society he must be prepared to show that he accepts. It is something of which his whole life and action must say, 'I know and bear witness that this is true.'

(vii) The **logos** is something which must be served (Acts 6.4). It is something which brings its duties. It is not only something which a man accepts for himself, but something which he is bound to wish to bring to others. It is not only something which brings wealth to his own soul; it is also something for which he must be prepared to spend his whole life.

(viii) The **logos** is something which must be announced. Two words are specially used. II Tim. 4.2 uses the word *kirussein*, which is the word that is used for a herald making a proclamation. Acts 15.36 and 17.13 use the word *kataggellein* which is the word that is used for making an official and an authoritative pronouncement. The proclamation must be made with authority and with certainty. The proclamation is so made because, when we announce the Christian message to others, we are not saying, 'I am saying this,' we are saying, 'Thus saith the Lord.'

(ix) The **logos** must be spoken with boldness (Acts 4.29; Phil. 1.14). Some time ago a book was published with the suggestive title, *No More Apologies*. It may well be that we have been too anxious to meet the world halfway, that we have tried too much to attune the Christian message to the world's ears, that we have watered it down, and emasculated it in order to make it less demanding and therefore more attractive. There should be a certain uncompromising quality in our proclamation of the logos.

(x) The **logos** must be taught (Acts 18.11). The Christian message begins with proclamation, but it must go on to explanation. One of the gravest weaknesses of the Church is that so many people do not know what Christianity really means and believes and stands for; and one of the gravest faults in preaching is that it so often exhorts a man to be a Christian without teaching him what Christianity is. Teaching is an essential part of the Christian message.

(xi) The **logos** must be acted upon (James 1.22). The Christian message is not something exclusively for the calm of the study, for the dissection of the lecture room, for the mental acrobatics of the discussion group. It is something which has to be lived out in day-to-day living.

(xii) The logos may involve persecution and suffering (I Thess. 1.6; Rev. 1.9). It is not likely that in this country we shall have to die for our faith: but we shall have to live for it, and there may well be times when we have to choose between what is easy and what is right.

If our relationship to the logos involves obligations, it will inevitably be liable to failures.

(i) The **logos** may be disbelieved (I Peter 2.8). It may be disbelieved either because the hearer thinks it too good to be true, or because, in wishful thinking, he does not want it to be true, because it condemns his life and seeks to change him.

(ii) The **logos** can both be snatched away and choked (Matt. 13.22; cp. Mark 4.15). The temptations, the

impulses and the passions of life can make a man forget the Christian message as soon as he has heard it. The activities, the cares and the pleasures of life can take up so much of a man's life and time that the Christian message is choked out of his life because there is no room left for it to breathe.

(iii) The **logos** can be corrupted and adulterated (II Cor. 2.17; 4.2). Whenever a man begins to listen to himself and stops listening to God, his version of the Christian message will be distorted and inadequate. Whenever he forgets to test his ideas and conceptions by the Word and the Spirit of God, he will produce a version of the Christian message which is his and not God's. If he goes on doing that he may well end by loving his own little system better than he loves God's truth.

(iv) The **logos** can be rendered ineffective (Mark 7.13). It is fatally easy to explain the Christian message away, to overlay it with human interpretations, to complicate its simplicities with conditions and reservations and explanations. Whenever we regard the Christian message as some-thing with which to make terms rather than something to which to surrender we are in danger of making it in-effective. Without 'yieldedness' to the message the message cannot have its full effect.

When we begin to examine the NT content of the Christian message, we begin to appreciate, as never before, the riches of this faith which is offered to us. The word logos is used in the NT with at least seven different genitives which express that in which the message consists. Let us look at them.

(i) **The Christian message is a word of good news** (Acts 15.7). It brings to us tidings about God which set the heart singing for joy. The discovery of love is always the greatest day in a man's life; and the Christian message leads a man to discover nothing less than the love of God.

(ii) **The Christian message is a word of truth** (John 17.7; Eph. 1.13; James 1.8). The whole of life is the search for truth. 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. That may be so, but life is intolerable if there are no fixed stars in it. The Christian message is that which makes a man sure.

(iii) **The Christian message is a word of life** (Phil. 2.16). The Christian message is that which enables a man to stop existing and to begin living. It gives him life with a capital L.

(iv) **The Christian message is a word of righteousness** (Heb. 5.13). It tells a man where goodness lies; it shows him what goodness is; it gives him new standards for life; and it enables him to reach them and gives him the power which is not his own power to achieve them.

(v) **The Christian message is a word of reconciliation** (II Cor. 5.19). The very essence of it is that God is not our enemy but our friend. It is not that God needed to be reconciled to us; the NT never puts it that way; it is we who needed to be reconciled to God. The great gift of the Christian message is that it removes the estrangement between man and God and makes possible the greatest friend-ship of all.

(vi) **The Christian message is a word of salvation** (Acts 13.26). It is a word of rescue. It rescues a man from the evil bonds which bind him. It strengthens him to defeat the temptations of evil and to do the right. It rids him of the punishment which is his by right, if God were to treat him only with justice and not with love. It lifts a man out of the deadly situation in which he finds himself in this life, and in which he ought in justice to find himself in the life to come.

(vii) **The Christian message is a word of the Cross** (I Cor. 1.18). It is the story of one who died for men. It is the story of a love which did not stop until it reached the very limits of sacrifice, and which thereby proved that there is nothing that God will not dare and suffer and sacrifice for the sake of man. The heart of the Christian logos is the Cross.

In the NT there is one technical use of the word logos. It occurs in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and it culminates in that great saying, 'The Word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14). This is one of the greatest sayings in the NT and we shall have to dig deep if we wish to grasp something of its meaning.

(i) We must begin by remembering that in Greek **logos** has two meanings. (a) It means word, and (b) it means reason, and these two meanings are always intertwined.

(ii) We must begin with the **Jewish background** of this idea. In Jewish thought a word was more than a sound expressing a meaning; a word actually did things. The word of God is not simply a sound; it is an effective cause. In the creation story God's word creates. God said, Let there be light, and there was light (Gen. 1.3). By the word of the Lord the heavens were made ... for he spake and it was done (Ps. 33.6, 9). He sent his word and healed them (Ps. 107.20). God's word will accomplish that which God pleases (Isa. 55.11). Always we must remember that in Jewish thought God's word not only said things; it did things.

(iii) There came a time when the Jews forgot their Hebrew; their language became **Aramaic**. It was necessary that the scriptures should be translated into Aramaic. These translations are called the **Targums**. Now in the simplicity of the OT human feelings, actions, reactions, thoughts are ascribed to God. The makers of the Targums felt that this was far too human; and in such cases they used a circumlocution (the use of an unnecessarily large number of words to express an idea) for the name of God. They spoke not of God but of the **Word**, the **memra** of God. This is the kind of thing that happened. In Ex. 19.17 the Targums say that Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with the **memra**, the **Word of God**, instead of, quite simply, with **God**. In Deut. 9.3 it is **God's Word**, the **memra**, which is a consuming fire. In Isa. 48.13 we read, Mine hand hath laid the foundations of the earth; and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. In the Targums this becomes, **by my Word, my memra**, I have founded the earth, and by my strength I have hung up the heavens. The result of all this was that the Jewish scriptures in their popular form became full of the phrase, **The Word, the memra, of God**; and the word was always *doing* things; not merely *saying* things.

(iv) **Now let us remember that Word and Reason are locked together** In Jewish thought there is another great conception—the conception of **Wisdom** (*sophia*). This is specially so in the Old Testament in Proverbs. By Wisdom God founded the earth (Pr. 3.13-20). The great passage is in Pr 8.1-9. There wisdom is from everlasting, before the earth came into being : she was with God in the day of creation. This idea was much developed in the books between the Testaments. In Ecclesiastes 1.1-10 there is the picture of Wisdom who was created before all things and who is intertwined with creation. In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom works all things (8.5). God made all things by his Word and man by his Wisdom (9.1, 2). Wisdom was God's instrument in creation and is woven throughout all the world.

So in Jewish thought we have two great conceptions at the back of the idea of Jesus as the Word, the *logos* of God. First, God's Word is not only speech; it is power. Second, it is impossible to separate the ideas of Word and Wisdom; and it was God's Wisdom which created and permeated the world which God made.

By the end of the first century the Christian Church was faced with an acute problem in communication. The Church had been cradled in Judaism, but now she had to present her message to a Greek world, to which the categories of Judaism were quite alien. As Goodspeed puts it

'A Greek who felt like becoming a Christian was called upon to accept **Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah**. He would naturally ask what this meant, and would have to be given a short course in Jewish apocalyptic thought. Was there no way in which he might be introduced directly to the values of Christian civilization without being for ever routed, we might even say detoured, through Judaism? Must Christianity always speak in a Jewish vocabulary?' Round about A.D 100 there was a man in Ephesus called John who saw this problem. He was perhaps the greatest mind in the Christian Church; and suddenly he saw the solution. Both Jew and Greek possessed the conception of the **logos of God**. Could the two ideas not be brought together? Let us see the Greek background with which John had to work.

(i) **Away back in 560 B.c there was a Greek philosopher called Heracleitus, who also lived in Ephesus** He conceived of the world as what he called a flux. Everything is in a state of change; there is nothing static in the world. But if everything is changing all the time, why is the world not an absolute and complete chaos? His answer was that 'all things happen according to the *logos*'. In the world there is a reason and a mind at work; that mind is the mind of God, God's *logos*; and it is that *logos* which makes the world an **ordered cosmos** and not a **disordered chaos**.

(ii) **This idea of a mind, a reason, a logos ruling the world fascinated the Greeks** Anaxagoras spoke of the mind (*nous*) which 'rules over all things'. Plato declared that it was God's **logos** which kept the planets in their courses, and brought back the seasons and the years in their appointed times. But it was the Stoics, who were at their strongest when the NT was being written, who passionately loved this conception. To them this **logos** of God, as Cleanthes said, 'roamed through all things'. The times, the seasons, the tides, the stars in their courses were ordered by the **logos**; it was the **logos** which put sense into the world. Further, the mind of man himself was a little portion of this **logos**. '*Reason is nothing else than a part of the divine spirit immersed in the human body*,' said Seneca. It was the **logos** which put sense into the universe and sense into man; and this **logos** was nothing other than the mind of God.

(iii) This conception was brought to its highest peak by **Philo**, who was an Alexandrian Jew, and who had the aim of joining together in one synthesis the highest thought of Jew and Greek. To him the **logos** of God was '*inscribed and engraved upon the constitution of all things*'. The **logos** is '*the tiller by which the pilot of the universe steers all things*'. '*Every man is akin in understanding to the divine logos*.' '*The logos is the high priest which sets the soul before God*.' The **logos** is the bridge between man and God.

Now we can see what John was doing when he uttered his tremendous statement, 'The Word was made flesh.' (Jn 1:14)

(i) **He was clothing Christianity in a dress that a Greek could understand.** Here is a challenge to us. He refused to go on expressing Christianity in outworn and Judaistic categories. He used categories that his age knew and understood. Again and again the Church has failed in that task through mental laziness, through fear to cut adrift from the past, through shrinking from possible heresy; but *'the man who would discover a new continent must accept the hazard of sailing upon an uncharted sea.'* If we are ever to tell people about the Christian message we must tell it in language that they can understand. That is precisely what John did.

(ii) **He was giving us a new Christology.** By calling Jesus the **logos**, John said two things about Jesus. (a) Jesus is the creating power of God come to men. He does not only speak the word of knowledge; he is the word of power. He did not come so much to say things to us, as to do things for us. (b) Jesus is the incarnate mind of God. We might well translate John's words, 'The mind of God became a man.' A word is always 'the expression of a thought' and Jesus is the perfect expression of God's thought for men.

We should do well to rediscover and to preach again Jesus Christ as the logos. the Word of God. (BORROW [New Testament Words](#) - [William Barclay](#))