

Jesus is the Word

John 1:1

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Radio Transcript:

How can Jesus be God and the Word at the same time? Find out on Change by Grace. Welcome to Change by Grace. I'm pastor Steve Hereford. Today, we're looking at one of the most profound declarations in all of scripture.

Jesus Christ is both God and the Word. He was with God from the beginning as revealed in John chapter 1. What does it mean when John says the Word was God? Well, let's find out. Well, this morning we're pausing from our study of Genesis to direct our attention to another important passage found here in the gospel of John.

You should still be there if you still have your Bibles open to John chapter 1. This morning we're going to look specifically at the first two verses that I read already, but I do want to read them again just so that we have them in our mind as we take this time to study them. John chapter 1 and verses 1 and 2. It says, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Now I chose this passage this morning because it's my conviction that there are many that are okay with talking about Jesus as a baby. But this passage said there's so much more than him coming into the world and taking on a body. This tells us about his preexistence. This tells us about eternity past. And John's purpose, even in saying this as well as the entire book of the gospel of John is to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity.

Again, there are many people that have many different views about Jesus. You could just survey and you would find so many different views. But the one that's very common, of course, during this time is the manger scene. Jesus coming into this world as a baby. Now that's fine because there has to be a beginning of something, right?

But we need to understand that Jesus didn't begin right there. The cults would say that Jesus was created. That he is a creation of God. Well, you can't get that from this passage because it tells us verse 3, all things were made through him and without him nothing that was made was made. Well, he certainly had to be here to create everything.

And if all things he created, how would he create himself? But again, the cults do that to excuse who he is because in excusing who he is is trying to alleviate any kind of accountability that they have to him. But as I said earlier, that we talk about Jesus coming into this world as a baby, but what we should be talking about is again the true identity of this God child. We should be talking about the true identity of Jesus and that he is returning. He's coming back, but when he comes back he's not coming as a baby.

He's coming as a judge, coming as an executioner. And you don't hear much talking about that. In fact, you don't hear much talk about the second coming of Christ. Bible says in Revelation 1:7, Behold, he

comes with clouds and every eye will see him even those who pierced him. The book of Revelation ends with, even so come, Lord Jesus.

We should be focused on that. That's our hope. He is our hope. But there's nothing wrong with a manger scene. There's nothing wrong with adoring him as how it began with him coming into this world.

The Bible talks about in the book of Hebrews that a body was prepared for him. But do we again really understand the whole ramifications of that? Because the whole purpose of him coming into the world was to die. That's why we have the banner on the front of the building. It says, Jesus born to die.

That was his whole purpose of coming. Wasn't to give you a good happy life, make you feel better about yourself, help you deal with your ailments, or anything like that. He came for the purpose of dying for sin. That's his whole reason. In fact, his name Jesus means savior.

And as you look at this gospel right here, again you see that John is seeking to present Jesus's true identity and he does that throughout. In fact, here in verses 1 and 14, and then there are other verses that we'll look at in a minute, but he is presented as God incarnate. Incarnate means to be made flesh. Look there verse 14, and the Word became flesh. Well, understanding who the Word is and who it is that became flesh gives you a whole lot of understanding of his identity.

Here, of course, is talking about the Lord Jesus. But John presents him as God incarnate. He also presents him as Messiah. Chapter 1 verse 41, 1 of the 2 that heard John speak was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which is translated the Christ.

They found the Messiah. And then, of course, he's presented also as the savior of the world. Do you remember that's what the Samaritans proclaimed? He is the savior of the world. He's the one who brings the gift of salvation to mankind and people either respond by accepting or rejecting the salvation that comes through believing in him.

And so as we begin to look at this this morning, I want to again point your attention to the first two verses. John chapter 1 verses 1-2. And there, John begins his gospel and we're introduced to Jesus the word. He is the word. And again, though we're only looking at the first two verses, if we were to look at the first five verses, we would see that John gives us both the deity of Christ and his preincarnate work.

Herbert Lacher says of these five verses in the brief compass of 42 words, eternity, personality, deity, co equality, and creatorship are ascribed to him. That's what you find in the first five verses. That is more than a mouthful. The gospel opens up with one of the most elevated statements about Jesus found in the new testament. Let's begin to look more deeply at this.

He says, In the beginning was the Word. That's the Greek word, logos, translated word. It's used 3 times there in verse 1, but it occurs 1239 times in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and it's used 330 times in the New Testament. And the term generally means a word or a saying, but here John is applying it to a person.

He's applying it to Jesus Christ. He's saying Jesus is the Word. Now John is the only one to use this term. He uses it over in 1st John 5:7 where he says, for there are 3 that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these 3 are 1. He uses it in Revelation 19:13 when he's describing the rider on the white horse.

He identifies him as the Word of God. He says, he was clothed with a robe dipped in blood and his name is called the Word of God. So he's using this to speak of Jesus. He's the only person again that uses this type of terminology. So what does it all mean?

Why does he call him the Word? Well, John is speaking to 2 audiences. To the Jewish people it meant something different than it meant to the Gentiles. Wayne Grudem says that when this term is applied to Jesus the term implies both the Old Testament concept of the powerful created Word of God. He says, and the Greek idea is that of organizing and the unifying principle of the universe.

In other words, by calling Jesus the word, God was expressing himself to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. In fact, when you look in the old testament, you hear that phrase, thus saith the Lord. Well, here he is in a in a body. Here he is in a person. You're seeing the word incarnate.

And so he's saying, if you want to know the word that brought everything into existence, here he is in a body, the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Greeks, he's saying, if you want to know the organizing and unifying principle of the universe, here he is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Greeks were all caught up in ethereal, this kind of brainy kind of stuff. You know? Wisdom is what they were seeking after, and Jesus was all of that.

In fact, we find over in Hebrews 1:1 and 2 these words that God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by his son. So we see here, he is the word. He is the means by which God is communicating to us And he also says, whom he has appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the world. So those two concepts. He is thus saith the Lord.

He's also this organizing and unifying principle of the universe. In fact, he holds all things together by the word of his power. So again, he's speaking to 2 audiences. He's the word of the Lord as expressed in the Old Testament. He's the organizing and unifying principle of the universe that the Greeks referred to.

But we see more and that's where we start getting into his pre existence. He existed before the beginning. It says, in the beginning was the word. What beginning is he talking about here? Because many like to take this back to Genesis 1:1 where it says, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Is he talking about the creation of everything? Or is he going back before the the creation of everything? I believe he's going back before everything. It says in the beginning. This is another way of saying that Jesus existed before time and before creation.

The word beginning is the Greek word arche and it could mean source, it could mean origin, rule, authority, It can mean one who's in authority, one who is a ruler. All of these meanings are true of Jesus

who is the source or the origin of the universe and who is its ruler. We say that Satan is the god of this world, but he is subjected to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the creator. He created Satan.

As we said last week, Satan was created. People tend to misunderstand and try to put him on the same level as God, but you can't do that. The Bible tells in Ezekiel 28, he was perfect in the days in which he was created. He was an angel, a cherub, one of the highest angels that he sinned. And he led a third of the angels with him who also sinned.

And in their rebellion, they were cast to the earth. This term, as I said, is referring to before creation. It's not referring to the beginning of the universe because again, creation is not mentioned until you get to verse 3. Again, all things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made. So go before all of that.

In the beginning, now I believe that he also used the term beginning to give us a point of reference because if he said it another way, in the beginning whenever there was a beginning, we don't quite understand that. We we kind of need a point in time and space and so forth. But the best way to explain God in terms of where he came from is just to say he's always existed. He was never created. He's always been.

And that's true of the trinity. That's true of the son and of the holy spirit. Moulton and Milligan state that in Genesis 1:1, the sacred historian starts from the beginning and comes downward thus keeping us in the course of time. Here, John starts from the same point but goes upward thus taking us into the eternity preceding time. So we could say that the logos here is before all time, so there are no temporal statements that could be made about him.

Eternal preexistence is plainly implied. Look at it again. In the beginning was the word. Let's focus in on that verb *aimi*, That word was. It's an imperfect verb, so it means to describe continuous action in the past.

You could read the verse back this way, in the beginning always existed the word. He always existed. Like I said, you can't put a point in time the cults want to put in there that Jesus was created, and they misunderstand the word firstborn. Firstborn doesn't always mean firstbornborn, it could also mean preeminent. And like in Colossians chapter 1, it's used to speak of preeminence.

He's the first overall, He's preeminent overall. Just like in the book of Hebrews, he is presented as being superior to all. So by saying in the beginning the logos did not then begin to be, but at that point at which all else began to be, He already was. JC Ryle says, He had no beginning. He was before all things.

There never was a time when He was not. Colossians 1:17 says, and He is before all things and in Him all things consist. He's before all things. So He can't be a creation of God if He's before all things because what is a creation? A thing.

He's before all things and in Him all things consist. So he's before all of that. Jesus even said he was before all of that. John 17:5, he's praying this in the garden to the father. He says, Oh now father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

Before. Hebrews 7:3, when it talks about Melchizedek, it tells us that he is without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. So he's comparing Melchizedek to the Son of God without father without mother without genealogy having neither beginning of days nor end of life. And there it's talking about his pre existence before he came to the earth and took on any kind of physical form. Because we know when he came into the world he came through Mary.

Right? He was born from Mary. And we pointed out last time that feminine language that was used there speaking of him being born of Mary and not of Joseph. Joseph was like a foster parent. No real relation, no blood relation.

So he existed before time in creation. He's always been. Notice what else he says here. He says, and the Word was with God. Then verse 2, he was in the beginning with God.

What's he saying there? He's telling us that Jesus was with God the Father. What else is he saying there? He's giving us a glimpse of the glory of Jesus when he talks about this. When Jesus came into this world, when he came for the purpose of dying on a cross, he came as a servant, a bond slave, a slave.

And he was obedient to the point of death, took on a body. This was humiliation because he left heaven's glory and came to this earth and took on this body. In fact when you look at this, it says there that He was with God, you find that imperfect verb again, He always was with God, and that's how we could translate it. But the the two words with God is and that that literally means face to face. It gives the picture of 2 personal beings facing one another and engaging in intelligent discourse.

You might go back to Genesis and see some of that where he says, let us make man in our image. And there you have the Trinitarian conversation occurring in the creation of man. And we find other places like at the end of chapter 3 when we get there in Genesis 3 where that inner Trinitarian conversation occurs again and saying that lest man reach out and touch the tree of life and be left in that permanent state that he is now in because he had taken of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they had to banish him from the garden. But again you find that inter Trinitarian conversation occurring there. And here from all eternity, Jesus says the second person of the Trinity was prostantheon.

He was face to face with the Father. He was in this deep, intimate fellowship. Scripture talks about that. He said on one occasion in John 8:58, before Abraham was, I am. The gospel of John points out the 7 I am statements that he used.

We're very familiar with the one in John 14:6 where he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. But when he said this in John 8:58, they knew what he was saying because they wanted to kill him. They said blasphemy, because he was claiming equality with God. Because that I am statement came from where? Exodus 31:4.

When Moses asked, who is it that I say is sending me? Because he was sending him to pharaoh. What did God say to him? I am who I am. That's who's sending you.

And here Jesus says that he is the I am. He can't have 2 I am's unless they're equal. And he is equal will demonstrate that. But go back to the prayer in the garden in John 17. He makes another statement in

verse 5 where he says, and now O Father, glorify me together with yourself, here it is, with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

So again, think of it in this picture. Before the incarnation, he was in glory with the father. In this intimate deep relationship with the Father, this face to face relationship and again, he describes it as this glory that he had. He says it again in verse 24, he says, Father, I desire that they whom you gave me may be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which you have given me for you loved me before the foundation of the world. So again, when we hear statements referring to the face to face relationship that Jesus had with the Father, yet in an infinite act of condensation Jesus left that glory.

He left that glory. He left the glory of heaven. He left the privilege of this face to face communion with his father, and he willingly emptied himself taking on the form of a bondservant. Being made in the likeness of men, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. That's what Philippians 2:7:8 tells us.

He left all of that. And so when John's audience picks up this scroll, we were talking about in Sunday school, it wasn't a book like you and I have right here. When he picked up this scroll and he heard, En arche, Enho Logos, that's what they were hearing. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. These are profound words. And we've got people running around everywhere trying to figure out where they came from.

What's their origin of life? Evolution? So they're being told. They're being told a lie. Big satanic lie.

Jesus wasn't created, He's always been. So that shuts down the cults, it shuts down the JW's. JW's really butcher John 1:1. And we'll talk about that too. But here, John's description of the word, it really reaches its pinnacle in the 3rd clause.

So we first said that he was in the beginning and he existed before time in creation and he's always been, and he was with God the father. Now let's really narrow it in. Not only did the Word exist from all eternity, not only did it have the face to face fellowship with God the Father, but the Word was God. The Word was God. That's very clear.

He says, and the Word was God. He says it. Language has no meaning if these four words do not clearly teach that Christ is very God of God. We're big on language, aren't we? We talk, we communicate just as they did.

In fact, in the Koine Greek that John uses in his gospel is the simplest of Greek. When students are studying Greek, they study the gospel of John. They study John's writings because he wrote with such simplicity. Paul is different. Yes, Koine Greek, but you see the wealth of learning in Paul as he writes.

John was a fisherman. John was a common man. John was no different than us. Again, Paul would be kind of like talking to a lawyer. Can't understand their language half the time, right?

I hate getting all those legal documents in the mail or something. I try to read it and go, I don't know what they're trying to say here. Can't you just talk in plain English for us? They use all this language. But here he says it very plainly, the Word was God.

That's his theme. Jesus is the God man. Jesus is God manifest. Now notice again He uses that imperfect verb, Aimi, and the word was. What did we say it meant?

Always would be another way to translate it. He's always been God. Even when He came to the earth and took on a body, He didn't cease being God, He's always been God. So you could read it back, and the Word was always God. That phrase is perhaps the clearest and most direct declaration for the deity of Jesus to be found anywhere in scripture.

You know, we point to different verses when we're pointing out the deity of Christ. And a lot of people, again, go away from this one, because what the JW's did with it. But this this verse, this phrase when it talks about the word was God, the word God is the the unauthorized construction. What that means is it's not preceded by the definite article. So what some people are saying then is that there is an indefinite noun there, and they'll translate it this way.

They'll say the word was divine or the word was a god. It's where Jovia's Witnesses are getting this from. But the absence of the article before theos or before the term God, it doesn't make it indefinite because that's not the subject. The subject is logos. That's the subject of the verse and the definite article is in that word, in the word logos.

Ho logos, ho, just a big o. That's the definite article. Ho logos And it shows again that this is the subject of the verse and so it's not saying God was the Word because the Word, not God, is the subject and it would be really theologically incorrect since it would equate God with the word, denying that they were 2 separate persons. This is what T. D.

Jakes affirms. He doesn't believe in a trinity. He believes it's just just one God. There's no distinction. That's really heresy.

It's a 3rd century heresy. People just flock to all of that stuff. Jimmy Swaggart, many people know him by name, more probably because of the scandals of his life, but he didn't believe in the Trinity either. People are sending 1,000,000 and 1,000,000 of dollars to these people. Folks, if you don't turn the TV on and watch that stuff, you need to sit there with your Bible.

And the very moment you see the arrow, you turn it off. You don't keep turning it back on. You don't certainly don't send your money to them to keep them funded to do this kind of stuff and to proclaim their heresy. And that's that's even true when JW has come to your house. If you're not armed to talk to them and you're not willing to share the gospel with them, you know don't even open your door.

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