

The Incarnation of the Word

Prologue - John 1:1-18

In the prologue we are given a bird's-eye synopsis of the entire book of John. Revealed here are the spiritual and Divine *origins* of the Word "whose *origins* are from of old," from eternity past (Micah 5:2). The Word became flesh and dwelled among us as Jesus the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. John uses intentional literary touches unlike any of the other gospel writers so as to dispel myths and unveil the truth of the Deity of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Drawing Near: As you begin your study time, ask God to open your spiritual eyes and heart and reveal the truths He wants you to gain from this lesson.

1. The prologue introduces many of the *key words* and *themes* in this book. **Read John 1:1-18 aloud** to get a broad overview of this section. **Carefully observe** what is being said and then identify and list the *major themes* as you discover them. Do the same for the *key words*. You may find it helpful to review the survey you completed in your introductory lesson.

The opening phrases in verses 1 and 2, although simply stated, are quite ingenious and expose some of the most profound mysteries of life in order that mankind might have a clearer conception of his infinite God/Creator/Savior. Now, let's examine John 1:1-2 phrase by phrase:

"In the beginning was the Word..."

2. The phrase *en arche* ("in the beginning") recalls the opening words of the Old Testament in Genesis 1:1. Compare John 1:1a with Genesis 1:1a.
 - a. As you observe these two phrases what similarities and differences do you discover?
 - b. The verb *was* in this verse is an imperfect tense in the Greek indicating continued existence. Take time to reflect on what John was revealing when he said "In the beginning was the Word." What truth do you think is being established in the opening phrase?

The concept of the “Word” (the *logos*) was one that was filled with meaning for both Jews and Greeks. John met both groups where they were and explained Jesus in terms they could understand. The primary point of reference for the Jews was the Old Testament. In Jewish thought a word was a powerful and effective thing. Genesis chapter one describes God as creating simply by means of a word.

3. **Take time to read** the following Old Testament passages. Consider how much more the Jewish audience would have been able to understand about Jesus when John designated Him as the “Word.” (Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 5:4-5; 1 Samuel 3:21; Psalm 33:6; and Jeremiah 1:2.) Comment on what you see in these passages that would help the Jews understand John 1:1.

Logos was a word that would communicate very profound concepts to the Greek world as well. In Greek philosophy the *logos* was the impersonal abstract principle of reason.

4. If you were a Grecian living in the first century, how might the opening words of John’s gospel challenge your concept of God? (*You may want to complete questions 5-7 before answering this question.*)

“And the Word was with God...”

With in Greek is from a preposition meaning “facing.” The Word was *facing* God the Father.

5. What picture does this paint in your mind’s eye?

Note: The concordance and dictionary (Bible and Webster) supply us with other words depicting *to face* or *facing*. Some helpful synonymous words/phrases are: frontal view, direction forward, viewing one’s countenance/appearance, face to face, looking at, turning toward, and in the presence of. (For further insight consult John 17:5, 24.)

“And the Word was God.”

Take some time to meditate on the significance and meaning of this phrase.

6. How does this statement expand your understanding of the “Word” and of God Himself?

In verse 2 the text reads, “**He was with God in the beginning.**” Reflect on how verse 2 sums up the three previous phrases expressed by John in verse 1.

7. Please take this opportunity to solidify and summarize the truths from verses 1 and 2 and write them out below in your own words.

8. What further evidences of the Deity of Christ can be seen in verses 3-5?

9. To gain a fuller picture of the multifaceted nature of Jesus Christ, meditate on the following related passages and write down any additional reflections or questions you may have. Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17; Colossians 3:4.

Note: **Zoe**, the Greek word for *life* refers to physical and/or spiritual *life* meaning alive, eternal life, living and life giving.

10. What does the phrase “*In Him was life and that life was the light of men*” (verse 4) mean to you personally? (1 John 1:5-7 provides further insight.)

11. The terms *light* and *darkness* are major symbols in John’s gospel. From the following references describe what they symbolize and explain their Biblical significance.

Proverbs 4:19; Psalm 36:9; and Ephesians 5:8-14.

Read carefully John 1:6-9, 15. Our attention is now turned toward the *forerunner*, John the Baptist. He is the first of many witnesses who will testify to the True Light.

12. Contrast the descriptions of John the Baptist and the True Light of God from verses 6-9, 15.

Take a few minutes to observe and reflect on the tragic reality recorded in verses 10 and 11. As we read verse 12 we see that there were and are a remnant and to these “believers” Jesus gave the right to become children of God.

13. By what means does one become a child of God according to John 1:13? (See also John 3:3.)
We will be studying this concept in greater detail in later chapters.

14. Consider what it means to *believe* in **His Name** and to *receive* Him. (See Romans 10:8-13.)

Throughout the prologue John has declared many profound truths of Christ’s Deity by extending our panorama of Him beginning in the heavenly realm of His preexistence. In the final five verses (14–18) John builds upon these foundational truths conveying each with meticulous care. This... that we might apprehend a more glorious and magnificent portrait of the Incarnation of the Word. “**The Word became flesh**”... is expressed clearly to us in four words and calls our attention to a supernatural marvel... that God, the Eternal Word became fully man and simultaneously remained fully God in one person, Jesus Christ. Without a doubt, the Incarnation is one of the greatest and most stunning miracles that has ever been or ever will be!

15. **Prayerfully reread verses 14-18** in the Amplified translation, if possible. Notice all that John is pointing out about the nature of the Incarnation and its impact on mankind.

Note: *In John 1:14 the verbs “made His dwelling” (NIV) and “dwelt” (NASB)... signify “tabernacled.” When the Word became flesh He tabernacled among us, pointing back to the Tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness.*

a. What did the first believers see, attest to, and experience as a result of God entering human history in the Person of Jesus Christ? (Compare Exodus 40:34 with John 1:14.)

b. What further reasons for the Incarnation are revealed in verses 16-18?

Personal reflection: The union of Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ opened the way for a multitude of blessings for the human race. Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; and Ephesians 1:3-10 describe a few of these. **Read and reflect** on the selfless love and miraculous means whereby Jesus provides the way back into an intimate and Divine family relationship with God the Father.

16. **Look back** over this lesson and recall what God has helped you to discover. What are some ways you can personally respond to this glorious revelation of Jesus Christ?