

John 1:1-5 The Beginning

Welcome to our first week looking at John's introduction. In this passage we look at both profound revelation and deep mysteries.

Community Questions:

Since we last met:

- 1) How has your understanding of God's holiness grown since studying God's character
- 2) What do you think is the biggest issue facing Australia this Christmas?

The Passage

Read John 1:1-5 What immediately stands out to you? Does anything in this passage particularly confuse you?

John begins his Gospel by stunning us with his description of Jesus Christ. He doesn't mention Jesus' name until verse 17, but it becomes clear right away that he is talking about Jesus. Rather than beginning with the story of His birth, John confronts us with His deity in eternity. Moses begins Genesis (1:1) by confronting us with the majesty of God, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the same way, [John 1:1](#) confronts us with the majesty of Jesus Christ, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." 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.

We cannot know God, who ([1 Tim. 6:16](#)) "dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see," unless He chooses to reveal Himself to us. John's point is that God has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is God.

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. It has been said, "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.

In our text, John emphasizes the same thing (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!

1. How would you answer someone who asked you to describe God? What difference does what you believe about God make in your life?
2. Why is the deity of Jesus Christ foundational to Christianity? Can a person who denies His deity be truly saved?
3. An early heresy (modalism) taught that God revealed Himself as the Father in the Old Testament, as the Son in the New Testament, and as the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. Why is this wrong? How does [John 1:1-2](#) refute it?

Jesus is the second person of the Trinity.

John continues, “and the Word was with God.” Leon Morris (*The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1971], p. 76) explains the preposition (“with”): “The whole existence of the Word was oriented towards the Father. Probably we should understand from the preposition the two ideas of accompaniment and relationship.... Not only did the Word exist ‘in the beginning,’ but He existed in the closest possible connection with the Father.” This shows that the Word is not an impersonal idea or philosophy, but a Person. This Person is distinguishable from God, although (as the first and third phrases of 1:1 show), He is eternal God.

Word and Creation

When modern readers approach the Prologue we almost always do so with the foreknowledge that John is talking about Jesus Christ. However, the earliest 1st century readers would not necessarily have known this.

4. Read [John 1:1-18](#) aloud while setting aside your presuppositions about the text. Imagine that you are a Jew, and don't know this is a Christian text, nor that it is part of the New Testament, as it obviously wasn't yet when John first wrote it. What would you make of the Prologue?
5. Why is Jesus called “the Word”? For what purpose is a word used? What is Jesus communicating to us as “the Word”? (See John 1:18)
6. If we look at Gen 1 (taking the hint from the phrase “In the beginning”) how do we see the Word being associated with great power?

The life was the light

John uses “life” 36 times in his Gospel, more than any other New Testament book. Those who are spiritually dead in their sins need life and Jesus is the source of that life. They are spiritually in darkness, but when they are born again, the light goes on.

7. In what sense are all men illuminated by the Light? (1:4) See Romans 1:18-21.

“[John 1:5](#) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” But the word may also be translated “comprehend,” and this meaning also fits a theme in

this Gospel. In 1:10b, those in the world “did not know Him.” In 1:11b, even His own people “did not receive Him.”

8. How similar is Australia today to the 1st century world in this respect? How many of your friends would be able to demonstrate an understanding of these verses. How many are in darkness?