



The Tomtate, Haemulon aurolineatum.

Illustration by Diana Rome Peebles 1998.

Courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Marine Fisheries.

Jesus as John Introduced Him

Understanding Jesus by Understanding the Word

Introduction

The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz by the Student [Samuel H. Scudder]

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz [a-gah-see], and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

"When do you wish to begin?" he asked.

"Now," I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic "Very well," he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol.

"Take this fish," he said, "and look at it; we call it a *Haemulon* [*hee-muh-lawn*]; by and by I will ask what you have seen."

With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me.

"No man is fit to be a naturalist," said he, "who does not know how to take care of specimens."

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground glass stoppers, and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge, neckless glass bottles with their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half-eaten by insects and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the professor who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish was infectious; and though this alcohol had "a very ancient and fish-like smell," I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed, when they discovered that no amount of *eau de cologne* would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face -- ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view -- just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour, I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me -- I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

"That is right," said he, "a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked."

With these encouraging words he added --

"Well, what is it like?"

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshly lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment:

"You have not looked very carefully; why," he continued, more earnestly, "you haven't seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!" And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor's criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, towards its close, the professor inquired,

"Do you see it yet?"

"No," I replied. "I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before."

"That is next best," said he earnestly, "but I won't hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish."

This was disconcerting; not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw.

"Do you perhaps mean," I asked, "that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?"

His thoroughly pleased, "Of course, of course!" repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically -- as he always did -- upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next.

"Oh, look at your fish!" he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue.

"That is good, that is good!" he repeated, "but that is not all; go on." And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. "Look, look, look," was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had -- a lesson whose influence was extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

A year afterwards, some of us were amusing ourselves with chalking outlandish beasts upon the blackboard. We drew prancing star-fishes; frogs in mortal combat; hydro-headed worms; stately crawl-fishes, standing on their tails, bearing aloft umbrellas; and grotesque fishes, with gaping mouths and staring eyes. The professor came in shortly after, and was as much amused as any at our experiments. He looked at the fishes.

"*Haemulons*, every one of them," he said; "Mr. _____ drew them."

True; and to this day, if I attempt a fish, I can draw nothing but *Haemulons*.

The fourth day a second fish of the same group was placed beside the first, and I was bidden to point out the resemblances and differences between the two; another and another followed, until the entire family lay before me, and a whole legion of jars covered the table and surrounding shelves; the odor had become a pleasant perfume; and even now, the sight of an old six-inch worm-eaten cork brings fragrant memories!

The whole group of *Haemulons* was thus brought into review; and whether engaged upon the dissection of the internal organs, preparation and examination of the bony framework, or the description of the various parts, Agassiz's training in the method of observing facts in their orderly arrangement, was ever accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them.

"Facts are stupid things," he would say, "until brought into connection with some general law."

At the end of eight months, it was almost with reluctance that I left these friends and turned to insects; but what I gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups.

-- from *American Poems* (3rd ed.; Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1879): pp. 450-54.

From: <http://people.bethel.edu/~dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm>

And thus we return to OUR Haemulon, the first two verses of John's Gospel account. There is more to see, and with the more come surpassing value -- if we would look, look, look.

[Read vv. 1-2]

- I. **In the Beginning Was the Word** (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.)
 - A. **"In the beginning" -- Indicates "realm of eternity...pre-creation setting" (Kit p.14)** especially in light of 1:3 which has "all things" coming into creation through the Word.
 1. Review: **in the beginning of time and creation** with directed allusion to the same beginning as in the Gen 1:1 creation account. "...the beginning of all things, the beginning of the universe" (Carson p. 114).
 - B. **"was"**
 1. For some this verb alone is enough to indicate the eternity of the Word. At the time when everything was created **the Logos already was**. For others they say that this argues only for the Word existing at the time of the beginning (within the period described as the beginning) and therefore not necessarily before creation.
 2. **The imperfect tense of "was" indicates ongoing action in the past -- the Logos was existing at the time of the beginning.** This again seems arguably to indicate the Logos pre-existed the beginning.
 3. **MacArthur on Verb Choice in 1:1**
 - a) εἶμι -- I am, here imperfect trans.: "was" -- the Word was
 - b) γίνομαι -- I came to be, here: "came into being." Used in vv. 3, 10, 12, 14
 - c) John's choice of verbs argues for the eternity of the Logos. John did not choose "came into being" in 1:1 (as he did in the following verses) but "was" to describe the state of the Logos "in the beginning. MacArthur: "...eimi stresses that the Word always existed; there was never a point when He came into being." (p. 16). Nice.
 4. **Kit draws on the first century meaning of "the Word" as allowing even "demanding" the eternity of the logos.** Why? Because "logos signified divine knowledge, wisdom and will. As long as the divine existed... the Logos existed. And so John's readers would have taken his statement at face value: The Logos existed before time, space and matter; the Logos existed eternally with eternal divinity." (Kit p. 15).
 - C. **"the Word"**
 1. **See previous message. These simple two words do not mean what we might take them to mean in our current understanding of "the Word". They mean what John and his original readers understood them to mean.**
 2. **Kit restates meaning of "the Word" in summary:** "To the Greek and Jewish philosophers and their followers, the Logos represented the interface between the divine and the natural -- between the created order and that which created it and upholds and governs it. The Logos signified the principle of divine knowledge and understanding (wisdom) which expresses itself in purposeful, directed and effectual power in both originating and ordering the material universe. Thus the Logos embodies the divine will and power as much as divine knowledge: the Logos makes actual, tangible and functional that which exists in the divine mind and purpose."(Kit p. 14).

The Word eternally existed. The Word was not created. John's Jesus is different that the Jesus of those who do not believe the Word to be eternal and who believe instead that He was created. I hope you will agree that we must know Jesus as John introduced

Him. Be always learning like Agassiz's student, and like Jesus disciples on the road to Emmaus.

D. The Significance of "In the beginning was the Word"

1. To understand the Word incarnate in Jesus as eternally existing and not created is quite different than understanding Jesus to have come into being in the first part of creation and as a part of creation. It is the difference between Creator-God and created-creation. Here John introduces Jesus by saying the Word eternally existed ("was") before creation! The story of our Lord Jesus does not start in Bethlehem in a manger, it starts before creation itself because the Word pre-existed creation. Our Lord is that big! Our Lord is that uncommon, that unique! That worthy of our appreciation and praise and worship! His humility allows us to call Him our friend, but His eternity begs our highest reverence and deepest awe. Doesn't it? Yes it surely does.

Point of Reflection: If considering the eternity of the Word (incarnate in our Lord Jesus) does not move us to devotion we may have taken our God for granted. May we right now and this week find time to appreciate and worship Jesus, the incarnation of the eternally existing Word, with our minds and heart full of how immensely great this God-Man was to have humbled Himself and taken on human form to set all things right. Further may we begin right now and continue to find time all week to appreciate and worship Jesus for who He continues and will eternally be: ... uncreated, eternally existing. Our's is no small god, the creation of creation's imagination. The Jesus John introduces us to is the very incarnation of the Word who existed before anything was created.

II. The Word was with God (καὶ ὁ λόγος πρὸς τὸν θεόν)

A. Better: "Face-to-Face With"

1. **Face-to-face = person-to-person** together in person.
2. **Culver** -- Conveying "relational intimacy and oneness...they are face-to-face in the sense that they are one in thought, intent, judgement, and work." (Culver, p.15). Kit sees this as speaking to HOW the Logos was in association to God not where.
3. **MacArthur cites W. Robert Cook on pros ton theon:** "That phrase means far more than merely that the Word existed with God; it "[gives] the picture of two personal beings facing one another and engaging in intelligent discourse"
4. **Carson**
 - a) The Word is a person
 - b) The Word is distinguishable from God
 - c) The Word is in personal relationship with God

B. Significance -- see MacArthur p.17-18

1. **He who was with God the Father came to be with us** and for us!

2. Think of our tremendous fortune as the ones the Word incarnate in Jesus has chosen to be with; and with not to “hang with” as modern day friends are “with” each other; but “with” with a purpose that is nothing less than **the purpose of God for His creation** -- our salvation=life; more, our life together; more, the setting right of this upside-down creation.
3. This led MacArthur to Wesley's song, "**And Can It be that I Should Gain?**" and its lyric with its familiar course p.17

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?
4. **This can lead us to rejoice for reasons even beyond our own gain** for the rightness of all things secured by Him who was with God in eternity sacrificing that most glorious of all possessions in order to be with us for His most glorious purposes, purposes we too infrequently consider.
5. This is Jesus as John introduces Him -- the eternally existing person of the Word who was with God and who came to us.
6. Do you feel like worshipping yet?

III. **The Word was God** (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος)

A. Takes Logos Concept beyond the Conceptions of John's First Readers

1. Jewish understanding that God is one not many, sent red flags flying when talk of even the divine Logos was said to be God. There is only one good. Was John saying there were two or that God wasn't one?
2. **Culver: Jews had no thought of “a divine Logos or a divine Messiah.”** JP: This is not to say there was no OT scriptural basis for such, just no Jewish expectation of such. "Yes, Messiah would come in Yahweh's name and in the power of His Spirit, but in the same sense as other men before him, including Moses, David and the prophets." (Culver p.16)
3. **John here is pushing his readers beyond what they knew of the Logos and God.**

B. Predicate Nominative Grammar

1. Basics of Predicate Nominatives

From: <http://evyenia-koinegreek.blogspot.com/2008/11/second-use-for-nominative-case.html>

Ο ἀπόστολός ἐστιν προφήτης.
The apostle is a prophet.

both 'απόστολος' and 'προφήτης' are in the nominative, because the verb 'εστιν' is a linking verb: it doesn't describe what the subject *does*, **it describes what the subject is**. The apostle is a prophet. In this sentence 'προφήτης' is a predicate noun, or predicate nominative.

2. The Word was God indicates

- a) **Not a=b, b=a** "mathematical" relationship between a and b where a and b are interchangeable
- b) **But A subset of B, but B not subset of A.** The Word is somehow a subset of God, but God is not a subset of the Word. The two are not interchangeable. The less known Word is described by the more known God. John is helping his readers come to know the less understood Word by saying it has the characteristics of the more known God.
- c) **Wallace classifies 1c as a "Subset Proposition"** not a "Convertible Proposition."

The Word is the Subject /part to
God the Predicate Nominative /class.

"The Logos belongs to the larger category known as Theos (p.44).

The force of this construction is most likely to emphasize the nature of the Word, not His identity. That is to say **the Word is true deity but he is not the same person as the Θεός** mentioned earlier in the verse." (P.45-46)

- d) **Commenting on the grammar Pastor Kit said** John, "was indicating that **the Logos and God share the same essence and nature, but without being identical and interchangeable** (cf. 17:17; 1 John 4:16)." P.16.
- e) **JP: I wonder of the significance of John's use of the Predicate Nominative construction rather than an adjective.** Just like 1 John 4:16, "God is love," says more than God is loving, so here the Word was God says more than the Word was like God but that they share the same "essence and nature" as Pastor Kit said. Can we say that adjectives modifying a person describe what a person is like and Predicate Nominative states who a person is by way of their nature? It seems so in this case.

C. Significance

1. If we are know Jesus as His apostle John introduced Him, we are to see Him as the incarnation of the eternal, personal, Word who was at the same time a person distinguished from God and of the same essence and nature of God. The Word (who became incarnate in Jesus our Lord) was God.
2. Some see Jesus as less. The Jews of Jesus' day saw Him as less. Many non-Christians I know and love see Jesus as less. Many people who regard themselves as Christians see Jesus as less. But Jesus is not less. He is the

incarnation of the eternal divine Word who always existed with God and who was God.

3. It is this Jesus in whom we believe and of whom we testify. If we are to be His witnesses we must bear witness not to a Jesus who is less, but a Jesus who is all the Scripture establishes Him to be.

IV. This One (2)... Him (3-4)

A. **Demonstrative Pronoun** “This One” -- V.2

B. **Personal Pronoun** “Him” -- Vv. 3-4

C. **Movement from demonstrative pronoun “this One” to personal pronoun “Him” moves the reader from familiar impersonal concept of “the Word” to unfamiliar more accurate truth that the Word is a person** -- a person distinguishable from God, pre-existing with God and therefore in relationship with God and somehow God --

D. Significance -- John’s readers needed to be brought along/grown in their understanding of the Word in order for them to understand Jesus. John is taking them from what they know and disclosing to them the real Jesus.

Conclusion

It strikes me that this is exactly what we to to allow John (and all the Bible writers) to do. Are we willing to depart from what we know to travel to what is true? I hope so. I pray so. Be Agassiz’ students. Be Jesus’ disciples on your own Road to Emmaus.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This One was in the beginning with God.”

Let’s Pray

Sermon Audio Input

Full Msg. Title: Jesus as John Introduced Him
Short Ver. Title: John 004
Series Title: The Gospel of John
Text: John 1:1-2
Key Words: Word

Message Outline

Jesus as John Introduced Him
Understanding Jesus by Understanding the Word

- V. In the Beginning Was the Word**
- VI. The Word was with God**
- VII. The Word was God**
- VIII. This One (2)... Him (3-4)**

Please See

Pastor Kit Culver's sermon and study notes for his John 004 message , "The Logos in Relation to God" from 8/2/15.

Examine the Scriptures (Be Berean!)

- John 1:1-18

Consider & Discuss (Be Transformed!)

- What wisdom can you glean from the story, ["The Student, The Fish and Agassiz"](#) ?
- **Community Group Discussion: Keeping in mind that when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge the enemy of more is some**, how do you better know Jesus by considering that "In the beginning was the Word"? How do you better know Jesus by considering that "the Word was with God"? How do you better know Jesus by considering that "the Word was God"? And finally how do you better know Jesus by considering John's use of the demonstrative pronoun "this One" in verse 2 followed by his use of the personal pronoun "Him" in verses 3-4 referring to the Word?

Memory & Meditation Verse

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This One was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him..." John 1:1-3a

Community Life

- **Looking Ahead: Goal for Fall 2015:** That we (each and together) would be the members of the body of Christ God intends, being "transformed by the renewing of our minds", ministering and being ministered to as He has gifted. **Means:** While actively and thoughtfully listening to what God has given us in the Gospel of John, I encourage everyone to either participate in one or more of the Community Groups available at SHC, or come up with your own God honoring "Body Life Plan."

Next Sunday

John 1:3-5