

“The Unity of the Godhead”
John 1:1-2
(Preached at Trinity, February 10, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began the Gospel of John. As I pointed out, John's Gospel is distinct from the other three. John wants us to understand that Jesus is the living Word who existed before the beginning of time. His opening words, “In the beginning was the Word” expresses the eternity of Christ.
2. The grand theme of the Gospel of John is Jesus as the Messiah who has come to save His people from their sins and by believing in Him we might have eternal life.
John 3:16 NAU - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
John 20:30-31 NAU - "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."
John is endeavoring to set the truth about Jesus before you so that you might believe.
3. John's Gospel is amazing in richness. He makes statements that are beyond our comprehension.
J.C. Ryle wrote: “Nowhere in the Bible shall we find such clear and distinct statements about our Lord Jesus Christ's divine nature. Nowhere shall we find so many expressions, which for want of mental power, no mortal man can fully grasp or explain.”
4. In the opening verses of this Gospel John tells us several truths for us to believe about Christ.
 - He is eternal – “In the beginning was the Word”
 - He is a person distinct from the Father – “The Word was with God”
 - He is God – “the Word was God”
 - He is Creator – “All things came into being through Him”
 - He is the source of all spiritual life – “In Him was life”
5. Last time we looked at the eternity of Christ, “*In the beginning was the Word.*” Christ existed long before the beginning of time. He is eternally existent.
Now John adds, “*and the Word was with God.*”
John's words are profound and of endless depth. He is saying that this eternal Word was both God and with God. In this single sentence that opens this Gospel John is declaring that Jesus is God and yet distinct from the Father. He was one with the Father, intimately united with the Father, and yet He was distinct from the Father.
6. The grammar in this passage is significant. The English doesn't quite capture the fullness. $\delta \lambda \acute{o} \gamma \omicron \varsigma \eta \nu \pi \rho \acute{o} \varsigma \tau \acute{o} \nu \theta \epsilon \acute{o} \nu$ – This isn't saying the Word was with God in the sense of accompanying Him but of personal discourse. The word literally means “before” God. A.T. Robinson wrote: “the literal idea comes out well, face to face with God”

Leon Morris wrote: “Not only did the Word exist in the beginning, but He existed in the closest possible connection with the Father.”

7. The second person of the Godhead was before the Father, equal with the Father, of the same essence as the Father, and in intimate fellowship with the Father.
There was individual personal fellowship, and yet one God.
 8. Tonight I want us to see several things from this passage.
- I. The essence of the Godhead
 - A. God is one
 1. When John says that “the Word was with God” he is affirming the singularity of God – there is but one God.
 2. He doesn’t say “the Word was a God” as the Mormons would suppose, as if Jesus was a God separate and distinct, but “the Word was God.” He is affirming monotheism. Jesus is the one true God.
 3. John is writing to both Jews and Gentiles. At the heart of Jewish theology is monotheism – that there is but only one God
Deuteronomy 6:4 KJV - “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD”
 4. Scripture continually affirms that God is the only God who reigns supreme and who will not share His glory with another.
 - a. The first commandment – “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”
 - b. God declares in **Isa. 48:11** - “My glory I will not give to another.”
 - B. God is a person –
 1. He bears all of the qualities of personality. The Word was both God and “with” God
 2. God is an intelligent, rational, moral being – He has self-awareness. He is a reasonable being capable of determining His own course of life, always in harmony with the unity of the Godhead. Anthropopathically He is described as possessing anger, joy, grief
 3. God is indivisible – Although God consists of persons He does not consist of parts.
LBC 2:1 – “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions.
 - C. Although God does not consist of parts there is plurality with God – God is Triune
 1. God is a person but He consists of three persons – not three beings. Each person of the godhead possesses personhood, each possesses personality - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
 2. These three are one God. Each of the persons of the Godhead possesses all of the attributes of God, not each one possess 1/3 of the Divine essence. They are the same in being, identical in nature. They are co-equal, co-eternal, of one essence, of one action, of one will.
 3. The three persons of the Godhead have always existed in perfect harmony and communion with each other
John describes the eternal Word as being in the bosom of the Father

John 1:18 NAS - "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*."

- D. This means that as we consider the economy or function of the persons of the Godhead we find diversity, but there is but one God existing in perfect harmony with Himself.

II. The interaction between the Godhead

- A. As we consider the eternal existence of the Godhead we see a picture of perfect eternal harmony, equality, and oneness. John says the Word was "*with God*"
1. They shared in perfect glory, majesty and splendor
John 17:1 NAU - "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You"
John 17:5 NAU - "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
 2. They shared in perfect, infinite, eternal love
 - a. The Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit shared a unique exquisite love for one another.
 - b. Trying to understand the love of God is hard for our finite minds to grasp.
Ephesians 3:18-19 NAU - "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
 - c. Paul is implying that to know and comprehend the love of Christ is to be filled with the fullness of God. It is at the height of knowing Him. We are in a love relationship.
 - d. God's love is hard for us to comprehend because our love is ever changing. We fall in and out of love. Our love is affected by external circumstances. God's love is unchanging and not affected by anything outside Himself. God IS love.
 The love shared between the persons of the Godhead is an expression of God's Divine essence.
 - e. John will declare to us in this Gospel that we can share in this love between the Godhead
John 14:23 NAU - "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."
John 15:9 NAU - "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love."
 - f. We can have fellowship with this one God. We can have a relationship with Him. We can know Him.
 - g. We take this for granted because of our elevated view of ourselves. We must stand in awe that the eternal, self-existent Creator would enter into our lives. He needs nothing and yet receives and loves us.

- B. It was in this eternal union of love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit produced the eternal Covenant of Redemption
1. The Word was with God in eternity and with God when time began
John 1:2 NAU - "He was in the beginning with God."
 2. With an eye upon the fallen race of men the Father looked upon His Beloved Son, the Son of His infinite love and declared to Him, "You must lay down your life for the people I have chosen to love."
 3. If you fail to understand this you won't fully understand or appreciate richness of the Covenant of Redemption.
And you won't fully appreciate the Father's judgment upon the Son at the cross. The fullest measure of God's wrath at the cross was the breach of the eternal fellowship of love between the Father and the Son. The Cross was an infinite curse upon sin and the Father turned away from the Son.
 4. Only when you understand this can you comprehend the words of our Savior.
Matthew 27:46 - "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
It was a cry of eternal love and union being broken.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus has returned to the bosom of the Father to share the glory that He shared from all eternity.
John 17:4-5 NAU - "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
2. Each person of the Godhead is active in our lives. We pray and worship by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father
Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven"
3. The Father keeps us as His own dear children sending forth the Spirit enabling us to cry out Abba Father
4. The Holy Spirit is God's active presence in our lives equipping us, empowering us, sanctifying us, protecting us. He helps us to pray, leads us in worship, equips us for service.
5. The Son is our Mediator providing access to the Father and sends forth the His Spirit teaching us of His ways. Jesus is God's revelation of Himself to man. To know Him is the greatest of blessings.
6. This glorious triune God has invited us to have a relationship with Him in His fullness. Do you know Him? You can have fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
1 John 1:1 NAS - "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."