

“The Eternal Word”

John 1: 1-5

Intro:

This is the Gospel which faces us with the absolute reality that Christ is God!

In the words of, J.F. Denham:

- (1) Divine names are given to Christ.
- (2) Divine attributes are ascribed to Him.
- (3) Divine works are wrought by Him.
- (4) Divine relations are sustained by Him.
- (5) Divine worship is demanded by and paid to Him.

The first five verses of the book give us an immediate sense of its purpose and gravity:

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

Joh 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

William Perkins outline:

In verses 1-2:

I. THE RELATION OF THE WORD TO GOD, as possessing the Divine nature and existing with God before creation.

In verse 3:

II. THE RELATION OF THE WORD TO THE UNIVERSE, as its Creator.

In verse 4:

III. THE RELATION OF THE WORD TO MEN, as being the source of life and light to them.

In verse 5:

IV. THE RELATION OF THE WORD TO FALLEN HUMANITY, as shining in the darkness, though the darkness comprehended it not. (*W. Perkins.*)

So let us use the outline of Perkins:

I. THE RELATION OF THE WORD TO GOD, as possessing the Divine nature and existing with God before creation.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Note,

We have at least four profound ideas in these verses:

- 1) Unequivocal Eternality
- 2) Unique Relationship
- 3) Unsettling Identity
- 4) Unequaled Immutability

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1) Unequivocal Eternality

“In the beginning was the Word”

Chrysostom:

“While all the other Evangelists begin with the incarnation, John, passing by everything else—his conception, his birth, his education, and his growth—speaks immediately of his eternal generation.”

Q. Why did John not say, “before the beginning?”

J. Cynddylan Jones, D. D.:

“Had St. John said “before” the beginning, he would have presented eternity under the laws of time, a mistake as grave as to describe the Infinite under the conditions of the finite. But mounting up higher than time and space, he leads us to the calm where God dwelleth.”

Q. Did our Lord have a beginning?

Augustine answers:

“There is no beginning for one begotten without beginning. And yet he is the Son, and yet he is begotten.”

The Nicene Creed:

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one substance with the Father.”

Note,

What John does not say!

He does not say, In the beginning, the word was made!

No!

The Word **“was”: ie - pre-existent!**

Cyril of Alexandria:

There is nothing older than “the beginning” if we stay with the definition of beginning (for there cannot be a beginning of a beginning), or else it would diverge from being in truth a beginning if there is something else one can imagine before it or that arises before it.

Otherwise, if anything can precede what is truly “beginning,” our language respecting it will go on into infinity with beginnings continually cropping up and making the one we are looking at a “second.”...

For “in the beginning *was*” the Son. But if he “was in the beginning,” what mind, tell me, can leap over the force of that word *was*? When will the “was” stay within a boundary, seeing that it always runs before ... whatever conception follows it?

Some, wrongly compare John 1:1 with Gen 1:1,

which reads –

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God **created** the heaven and the earth.

The Arians were such who tried to use this to say our Lord was created!

The simple question of Chrysostom will do here –

“For tell me, what has the word *was* in common with the word *made*?”

Also Ambrose notes:

“In the beginning,” we are told, “God created heaven and earth.” [Gen 1:1.] And the world was therefore created and that which was not began to exist. And the word of God was in the beginning and always was.

Q. Did God at some point not have the Word?

Q. Did Wisdom not exist?

Q. What saith the Scripture?

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

(first-born does not here mean born-first)

Also:

Heb 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

Heb 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, **having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.**

Also:

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Also:

Rev 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Not, I had a beginning but:

“I am the beginning”

So,

We have considered:

1) Unequivocal Eternality

Next:

2) Unique Relationship

“and the Word was with God”

Barnes:

“**Was with God**” - This expression denotes friendship or intimacy.

Compare:

Joh 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Note,

There was never a time when the word was not with God!!

Rev 19:13 ... and his name is called The Word of God.

Arrowsmith:

“Ask the sun if ever it were without its beams. Ask the fountain if ever it were without its streams. So God was never without His Son.”

Gregory of Nazianzus:

“There never was a time when [the Father] was without his Word, or when he was not the Father.”

Q. What saith the scripture?

1Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

1Jn 1:2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you **that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;**)

Note 2,

We have distinction between the Word and God, ie the Father!

As the Athanasian Creed says:

“The Son is not the Father, neither is the Father the Son”

That is why it is better to read the Nicene Creed:

“One Substance” not “One Being”

Cyril of Alexandria:

“sameness of nature will be confessed of both, yet the individual existence of each will surely follow, so that both the Father should be conceived of as indeed Father and the Son as Son.”

So we have considered:

1) **Unequivocal Eternality** - “In the beginning was the Word”

2) **Unique Relationship** – “and the Word was with God”

Thirdly;

3) Unsettling Identity

“and the Word was God.”

Or, if we were to transliterate:

καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος - “and God was the Word”

Note,

There should be something unsettling in this truth!

Solomon experienced something of this when he said:

1Ki 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth?

Then added emphasis in:

2Ch 6:18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?

Also;

John himself was in awe of this truth!

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Q. What about the Article?

Compare verse 6 :

“παρὰ θεοῦ”

Of verse one, J.C. Ryle said:

This verse is an unanswerable argument against three classes of heretics. It confutes

1. The Arians, who regard Christ as a Being inferior to God.
2. The Sabellians, who deny any distinction of Persons in the Trinity, and say that God sometimes manifested Himself as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as the Spirit, and that the Father and the Spirit suffered on the cross.
3. The Socinians and Unitarians, who say that Jesus Christ was not God, but man, a most holy and perfect man, but only a man. (*Bp.Ryle.*)

Ambrose answers the heretics thus:

“That which was “in the beginning” is not comprehended in time, is not preceded by any beginning. Let Arius, therefore, hold his peace.

Moreover, that which was “with God” is not confounded and mingled with him but is distinguished by the perfection unblemished that it has as the Word abiding with God; and so let Sabellius keep silence.

And “the Word was God.” This Word, therefore, consists not in uttered speech but in the designation of celestial excellence, so that Photinus’s teaching is refuted.

Furthermore, by the fact that in the beginning he was with God is proven the indivisible unity of eternal Godhead in Father and Son, to the shame and confusion of Eunomius.”

So we have considered:

- 1) **Unequivocal Eternity** - “In the beginning was the Word”
- 2) **Unique Relationship** – “and the Word was with God”
- 3) **Unsettling Identity** - “and the Word was God.”

Lastly:

4) Unequaled Immutability

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Geneva:

“This same”

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made **that same Jesus**, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Q. how does this doctrine affect us?

Mal 3:6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

1) Unequivocal Eternality - “In the beginning was the Word”

2) Unique Relationship – “and the Word was with God”

3) Unsettling Identity - “and the Word was God”

4) Unequaled Immutability – “The same was in the beginning with God.”

This is the God we Worship!

May the Lord bless his word to our souls!

Amen.