

Twelve Wonderful Truths From The Prologue of the Gospel of John

John 1:1-18

Introduction

- 4 Great Christological texts in the New Testament that provide the building blocks for a biblical and faithful Christology.

Phil. 2:6-11 → humiliation Col. 1:15-20 → creation

Heb. 1:1-3 → revelation John 1:1-18 → incarnation

- John's prologue "is a foyer to the rest of the Fourth Gospel (Carson, *John*, 111). All its major themes find their seed in these verses.
- Strong evidence that it is laid out chiastically and rhythmically. Reads this way even in English.
- Its theological depth is deeper than the ocean and yet its basic truths can be understood by a child!

Bottomline:

- God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ and all who receive and believe in Him can become a child of God! The words of C.S. Lewis in his classic work *Mere Christianity* are especially helpful in this context:
"Among these Jews, there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says he has always existed.

He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheist . . . anyone might say that he is a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But his man, since he was a Jew, could not mean that kind of god. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world, who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips” (*Mere Christianity*, 54-55).

- Will highlight 12 simple truths from this magnificent text for our [Christmas or Advent] reflection.

I. The Word has always existed

1:1-2

- “In the beginning” makes an immediate connection with Genesis 1:1. When time began and the universe came into existence the Word was there!
- Verse 2 simply repeats the truth of verse 1: “He [the Word] was in the beginning with God.”
- Word is the Greek *Logos*. It was rich in meaning and though we most often reflect on it theologically and philosophically, John’s use was evangelistic, missiological, and cross-cultural.

- To the Jews the Word of God “denotes God in action, especially in creation, revelation, and deliverance [salvation]” (Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 29).
- To the Greeks it is “the rational principle by which everything exists” (Carson, *John*, 114). But this Logos is impersonal and utterly unreachable. It certainly would not become incarnate, making contact with evil or inferior matter.
- The Logos of John 1 has always existed. It was never as the 4th century heretic Arius said, “There was once when he was not.”

II. The Word is God

1:1

- As we read this verse keep in mind the author (Jew) and audience (Jewish).
- “The Word was with God” (*pros ton theon*), in a face to face intimate relationship.
- “The Word was God” is a clear and unambiguous declaration of deity
 - The Word (Son, v. 14) is distinct from the Father (v.14)
 - Though distinct from the Father, the Son is equal to the Father in His deity.
 - Whatever it is that makes God, God; the Word is all of that!

- The Word (Son) is co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father.
- The Word is not some God or mostly God, He is fully and completely God! (10:30; 14:9).

III. The Word is the Creator

1:3

- Recalls Col 1:16
- If He made everything He cannot be a creature
- Note “all things” and not “some things” or “most things.”
- Note a Jew wrote this to Jewish persons and how they would have understood it; immediately connecting it to Genesis 1-2.
- To say that the Word is the Creator is to say that the Word is God!

IV. The Word gives us life

1:4

- Life (43) and light (16) are closely connected themes in John’s Gospel. In the 4th gospel they are usually related to salvation, through here the context would also include creation (vs. 1-3).
- Is Jesus the source of life? Just ask Lazarus, Mary and Martha! In John 11 Jesus tells Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live . . .” (11:25).

- Is Jesus the source of eternal life? Hear His words to Thomas in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

V. **The Word provides powerful spiritual light**

1:4-5

- As spiritual life, the Word is also the source of spiritual light. He is the one that gives light both to physically blind and spiritually blind eyes.
- John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- Is he the light of the world? Just ask the blind man in John 9 (cf 9:5). He opened his eyes physically (9:7) and spiritually (9:25, 38-39).
- This world is blinded by the darkness (v. 5) of death, evil, judgment, unbelief and wickedness. This is why Jesus says in John 3:19, “This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.” And, again in John 12:46, “I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness.”

- The light that shines forth from the Word is the light of both the Creator and the Savior. And, this light cannot be beaten! It will be triumphant and victorious!!

VI. The greatest man who ever lived bore witness to the Word 1:6-8, 15

- Matt 11:11 says, “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared . . .”
- John was sent by God as a witness (*martureo*, 47) that “all” might believe (43). A universal invitation but a limited application.

- 1) John the Baptist was a man not the Messiah 1:6
- 2) John the Baptist was a witness not the Word 1:7
- 3) John the Baptist was a lamp not the Light 1:8
- 4) John the Baptist was a prophet not the Savior 1:15
- 5) John the Baptist was a servant not the Son 1:15
- 6) John the Baptist was important but not indispensable 1:15
- 7) John the Baptist had a crucially significant position but he was not supremely pre-eminent 1:15

- Jesus was before John and greater than John

Almost all that is said about John can be applied to us in our global, mission’s assignment! Bruce Ashford puts it in a very helpful context in

an article entitled, “3 Things American Citizens Could Learn From Christian Missionaries.”

“Christian missionaries move their families overseas at great financial cost, sometimes risking their own lives in high-risk environments, for one reason: They genuinely care about the people to whom they will minister.

As Christians in the public square, we must exhibit the same genuine concern for the people with whom we discuss and debate public matters. Politics should be done out of a desire for the common good rather than merely to humiliate or crush the people with whom we disagree.

A good way to think about this is in terms of truth and grace. Truthful words without a gracious disposition makes us political bullies and jerks. Gracious dispositions without truthful words make us political wimps and non-entities. But truth and grace together—that wonderful combination exhibited by our Lord—enables us to break society’s ability to classify us and dismiss us as the hypocritical and bigoted special interest arm of a given political party.”

VII. The Word came into the world He created

1:9-10

- Verse 9 anticipates v. 14.
- The true light, the real light has 1) come into the world (61) and 2) enlightens everyone. Carson is helpful, “What is at stake . . . is the objective revelation, the ‘light’ that comes into the world with the incarnation of the Word, the ‘invasion’ of the ‘true light.’ It shines on every man and divides the race. . . . In John’s Gospel it is repeatedly the case that the light shines on all, and forces a distinction (e.g. 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:39-41). This light shines upon every man (whether he sees it or not).” (p. 124).
- So the true light who gives life came into the world (vs. 9-10).
- He made this *kosmos*, and yet amazingly this *kosmos* [of humanity] did not know or recognize its Creator.
- But, it gets worse.

VIII. The Word was rejected by the world and His own people

1:10-11

- The Word came to what rightly belonged to Him as its Creator, but it did not know, it did not recognize, its Maker. Again, the world of human person is in view.

- Verse 11 gets more specific. He came to his own people, the Hebrews, the Jewish nation of Israel, and they rejected Him, they “did not receive him.”
- He came to his own home and they would not welcome Him in.
- The Life came but they preferred death.
- The Light came but they preferred darkness.
- The World belongs to Jesus, and Israel especially belongs to Jesus, and they both said we don’t want you.

IX. The Word makes us children of God when we receive and

believe in Him

1:12-13

- Verse 12 is the soteriological apex of the prologue. It is one of the clearest statements in all of the Bible about the simplicity of how people are saved.
- “But to all”! No exclusion to this declaration and promise. All are invited.
- “Who did receive him, who believe”: receiving him and believing in Him are basically synonymous. You trust in Him, have faith in Him.

- “His name”: this person; who He is and what He has done. The rest of John will reveal that this refers to His sinless life, marvelous works, death, burial and bodily resurrection for the forgiveness of sins.
- John 20:31 is a nice complement to 1:12 that also provides the purpose statement for the entire gospel, “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
- We receive the right, authority, to become adopted “children of God” when we receive Jesus as our Savior (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:4).
- This salvation is a sovereign act of our sovereign God through regeneration or the new birth (John 3) as v. 13 makes crystal clear. Note the 3-fold negation. The new birth is nothing but an act and accomplishment of a sovereign God.

X. The Word became human and lived among us and we

saw His glory

1:14

- If verse 12 is the soteriological apex of the prologue, verse 14 is the Christological apex.
- It teaches us that though there was a time when Jesus was not, there never was a time when the Son was not.

- The Greeks were on to something in their concept of the *Logos*, but it was incomplete.
- John's use of *Logos* is brilliant. It is a masterful bridge word to speak to both the Jewish and Greek cultures.
- The term itself was well known, but John fills it with new meaning.
- The Greek *Logos* was “reason” and an “it.” John's *Logos* is” the Word” and a “person.”
- The Greek *Logos* was up there and unreachable. John's *Logos* came down here and we saw Him!
- John's *Logos* is God's personal, visible communication to humanity in revealing and redeeming power!
- *Logos* does not explain Jesus, the Christ, the Son. Jesus Christ the Son explains the *Logos* and fills the concept with new meaning.
- The *Logos* became flesh [a man] and dwelt [Gk. *eskenosen*], pitched His tent among us. *The Message* says, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”
- And what did we see? “We saw his glory (15), glory as of the only (Gr. *monogenous*, cf. 3:16) Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” In the Son, we saw on full display the greatness and goodness and glory of God the Father.

- John Piper: “When you watch Jesus in action, you watch God in action. When you hear Jesus teach, you hear God teach. When you come to know what Jesus is like, you know what God is like” (“The Word Became Flesh” Christmas Eve, 12-24-89). [And,] if you don’t worship Jesus you don’t worship God. As Jesus says in John 5:23, “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.
- The soteriological and missiological ramifications of this statement are massive.

XI. The Word brought us grace and truth

1:14, 15-17

- Verse 14 tells us the Word is “full of grace (3) and truth” (true/truth, 45).
- Verse 16 tells us that of this fullness we have received grace upon grace.
- The glory of God is revealed in connection with His grace and truth.
- Exodus 33-34 is the Old Testament background and context for this New Testament statement.
- Those who are God’s children by receiving and believing in Jesus receive grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing, waves of grace after waves of grace. They just keep on coming. They never end.

- Piper sum it up beautifully: “God is gracious to us and true to himself. Therefore, when his Son comes, he is full of grace and truth. When Christ died, God was *true to himself*, because sin was punished. And when Christ died, God was *gracious to us*, because Christ bore the punishment not us.” (“We Beheld His Glory, Full of Grace and Truth,” 11-2-08).
- Verse 17 should be read with verse 16 or we may misinterpret it and think wrongly about the goodness of the law given through Moses. The law was a gift of grace and truth. But, Jesus Christ is another and even greater gift of grace and truth. Moses gave us a good gift of grace and truth, but “Jesus Christ” (only here in the Prologue) gave us another and even better gift of grace and truth. Again, I cannot improve on the insights of John Piper:

“Moses may have mediated the best gift he could—recording the law. But John 1:18 says that vastly superior to that is the presence of God himself, as the end of verse 18 says, making God know, “narrating God.” Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness; Jesus himself was lifted up (John 3:14). Moses gave the manna from heaven; Jesus himself was the true bread from heaven (John 6:32). Moses wrote about Christ (John 5:45); but

Christ was Christ. The law of Moses was the word of God, but Christ was God, the Word.

That is the sort of contrast John wants us to see. The whole point is the vast superiority of Jesus over Moses. And the focus is on seeing the glory of God. Moses glimpsed the back of God's glory. Jesus embodies the fullness of God's glory. There is an infinite qualitative difference between Moses the creature and Christ the Creator—between Moses the pointer to grace and Christ the performer of Grace.” (“From His Fullness We Have All Received, Grace Upon Grace,” 11-9-08).

XII. The Word exegeted for us the glory of the Father 1:14, 18

- No human in their fallen state has or ever could look upon undiminished deity and live. John's simple and direct statement has ample biblical support from both testaments. (Ex. 33:20; 1 Tim. 6:16).
- However, with the coming of the Word (1:1, 14), the Son (1:14), Jesus Christ (1:17), a new day has dawned. Things have changed.
- We have seen the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (1:14), in the incarnation.

- Further, the beloved Son who for all eternity has been in the closest and most intimate relationship with the Father has broken the barrier and torn down the wall so that humans can see God.
- “The only God” (*monogenēs theos*, to be preferred to *monogenēs huios*, Robertson, V, 17), a clear and direct declaration of the deity of the Son, as well as His distinction in person from Father, he has *exegésato*, exegeted, made known the Father in whose bosom He rest.
- Jesus has exegeted God to us. Carson, “Jesus is the narration of God” (p.135). In words (7 discourse/7 “I AM” statements) and works (7 sign miracles) the Son has revealed the Father. Simply put, if you want to see God and know God, look at Jesus. He tells us all about Him.

Conclusion

Light looked down and saw darkness,

I will go down said Light.

Life looked down and saw death,

I will go down said life.

Love looked down and saw hatred,

I will go down said Love.

So Light came down and conquered darkness!

So Life came down and conquered death!

So Love came down and conquered hatred!
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!