



Lesson 207.5

The Preincarnate Christ

Story Elements

- **Text:** John 1:1-18
- **Setting:** from eternity and throughout history
- **Main Characters:** God the Father and God the Son
- **Plot:** John begins his gospel with a wondrous declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ.
- **Key word(s):** “the word was _____” – this is the key phrase because “[t]he evangelist here lays down the great truth he is to prove, that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father.”¹ (cf. 20:31)
- **Climax:** *John 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.* This is the climax of the passage because it beautifully summarizes the person and mission of

Christ: he is the Word made flesh that came to declare God to fallen mankind.

Christ the Logos

- (vv 1-3) John begins his gospel the way Moses begins the first book of the Bible: *in the beginning*. This is on purpose, to link Christ with the beginning of all things and to show that he is _____.
 - John uses a term for Jesus that is peculiar to John’s writings²: he calls Jesus **the Word** (Gr: *logos*). In the first century Greek mind, logos had two understandings: “*Christ is the **Idea** [logic] of God and the **Expression** of God.*”³ Matthew Henry describes this two-fold understanding as *intelligence* and *utterance*:⁴
 - Intelligence** - As the idea, or logic, of God, we do not mean that God or Christ are merely ideas, but that Christ shows us the reasoning of God – he reveals God’s _____ to us.
 - Utterance** - As the expression of God, he is the uttered word. As the spoken word reflects the thoughts of the mind, so Christ’s words are the very words of _____ (cf. Heb. 1:2; Matt. 17:5).

➔ Matthew Henry explains: “He is *the Word* speaking from God to us, and to God for us. John Baptist was *the voice*, but Christ *the Word*: being *the Word*, he is *the Truth*, the *Amen*, the *faithful Witness* of the mind of God”⁵

- The Word was *in the beginning* – that is, before anything began, the Word already was.
 - The Word was *with God* – “not with men or angels; for he was before either of these; but with God.”⁶
 - (v 2) The Word was *God*. *The same was in the beginning with God* – Jesus did not become God, or a God, but always was, is, and shall be God.
- (v 3) John gives not only a beautiful description of Christ’s deity, but a cogent argument for the same. *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*. John’s argument can be understood this way: Jesus is not a created being, because he made everything that was created, and since he did not create _____, he must be eternal and uncreated.

Christ the Life and Light

- (v 4) Here John describes Jesus as the one in whom is *life* and *light*.
 - In him was life* – God is the *living God*, the giver and taker of life (Ezek. 18:4); not only physical life, but

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1915.

² It is possible Jesus Christ is referred to as the Word in Acts 20:32; Heb. 4:12; Lu. 1:2. (See Gill)

³ A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Jn 1:1–18.

⁴ Henry.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible*, <https://johnngill.thekingsbible.com/CommentaryVerse/43/1/1>

spiritual life comes from God through Christ.

- (b) *the life was the light of men* – the life that God gives only to humans comes with the light of the soul, or reason. This light sets us apart from animals; God made man *a living soul* (Gen. 2:7). In this way we can understand how Christ *was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the* _____. (John 1:9) Matthew Henry explains: “By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ.”⁷
- (c) (vv 6-9) John plainly differentiates between mortal John the Baptist and divine Jesus Christ.
 - i. John was sent from God; Jesus came from the _____ of the Father (v 18).
 - ii. John was a voice; Jesus was the _____.
 - iii. John came before as the forerunner; Jesus, as God the Son, existed before John the Baptist (v 15).
 - iv. John was a witness of the Light; Jesus was the true Light.

Christ the Image of the Invisible God

- 4. Though Christ was already in the world in the sense of his creating and upholding power (Heb. 1:3), Christ came into the world as a man by _____; Christ *became flesh and dwelt among us*. (v 14)

➔ Contrary to those who deny the pre-existence of Christ, John plainly states that Christ was God and **became a man**, not that Christ was a man that became a god.

- 5. (v 18) *no man hath seen God at any time*. (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16) How can the invisible God be seen by people? How was it that in the Old Testament, some saints spoke of seeing God? The New Testament explains:
 - (a) The apostle states that Moses *esteemed the reproach of* _____ *greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*. (Heb. 11:26) Here there is an explicit connection of the God of Israel with Christ himself.
 - (b) Paul states that the _____ that accompanied the children of Israel in the wilderness was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:4)
 - (c) When _____ saw the Lord sitting upon the throne (Isa. 6:1), John says that what Isaiah saw was the glory of Christ. (John 12:41)

➔ There are many other passages that show plainly, or at least hint strongly, that Jesus is the _____ of the LORD in the Old Testament – **that when men saw God in the Old Testament, they were seeing the preincarnate Christ**.

APPLICATION ➔ How wonderful it is to live in the New Testament age, when God is made known to us clearly and plainly through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Answer Key: Key word(s): “God” 1) Creator; a)i) mind; ii) God • 2. himself • 3. b) world; c)i) bosom; ii) Word • 4. incarnation • 5. a) Christ; b) Rock; c) Isaiah ➔ Angel

⁷ Henry, 1916. Henry adds that Christ also lightens every man by the spread of the gospel to all the world. (cf. Luke 2:32). See Gill on this passage.