

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Word Among Us

by Dan Trygg

“In the beginning was-being the Word, and the Word was-being with God, and the Word was-being God. ² He was-being in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was-being life, and the life was-being the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... ⁹ There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every person. ¹⁰ He was-being in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His radiance, splendor as of an only-son from a father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:1-5,9-12,14

Although the author of this gospel never identifies himself directly, there is very little question that it was written by John, the son of Zebedee. Numerous early church sources name him as the author. There was never any serious question as to this, until recent times, when some supposed that another “John the elder” may have been the author. Supposedly this person also lived at Ephesus, where the apostle John lived in the latter part of his life. Most scholars have dismissed this theory as erroneous. **The author of this gospel was certainly very familiar with the customs, language, and sites mentioned in this book.** Historically, Bible scholars have thought John wrote this very late in the first century. However, **there is no reason within the book to think it had not been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A.D.** Had John written *after* this time, certainly he would have mentioned this event. We also have the discovery of P52, a papyrus manuscript fragment from Egypt, which has been dated from 100-125 A.D. Because manuscripts were hand-copied, in order for this manuscript to travel to Egypt, it would have had to be written years earlier, and have been a widely distributed text. This argues for an earlier date, rather than a later one.

John seems to have prior knowledge of the other gospel accounts, because he includes very few duplicate stories, and fills in a lot of details left out by the other accounts. **He tells us clearly his purpose in writing in 20:30,31** – “...these things have been written in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.” **John makes no apologies for attempting to make a case for Christ.** He very clearly makes direct claims for Jesus’ divinity, and He clearly reports numerous times where Jesus made direct claims for Himself. In fact, **His writing revolves around three significant lines of evidence to support his assertion that Jesus was none other than God in the flesh.** We will develop that in future weeks.

John 1:1-18 is often called the Prologue to the gospel. It definitely takes more of a cosmic, big-picture view of who Jesus is, and what the purpose was for His coming. The language is at once very simple, and yet precise. It is full of poetry and symbolism, yet it is disciplined in its focus and content. The ground John covers in these 18 verses is amazing. He states that the Word existed before creation. He was *with* God, and somehow *was* God. Everything was created by means of Him. Spiritual life was in Him, and this life gave Light to human beings. Darkness tried to obscure this Light, but it could not. God raised up John the Baptist to bear witness to the Light. The Word became human and lived among us. We could see His inner nature shining out of His human body, expressed in the graciousness of His heart toward people and the truth which He spoke. As we come to know Him, we find out more about His Father. In fact, that is why He came: to make His Father known. Those who accept His witness and receive Him as their Master receive the legal right to become God’s children by faith in Him.

That was the overview. Now, let’s look at some of the details. **John introduces us to “the Word”.** He boldly asserts, “in the beginning was-being the Word”. What beginning? The beginning of *this* story? No. It is clear from the next verse that John is talking about the beginning of time, as we know it. **The Word was here before everything else.** The Greek term John used was “logos”. Logos means “word, message, thought, reason, logic”. Before *anything*, came to be, the Thought, Reason and Expression of God existed. **The Thought was existing with God, and this Thought or Word was, in fact, God.** This Thought or Word was existing *with* God in the very beginning. It is interesting how, if we just use the definition “Thought” it is much easier to understand how it could be “with God” and even “be God”, just like our own thoughts are “with us” and really are “us”. I translated the Greek verb form as “it was being” because it implies an ongoing state, with no beginning or end in view. The Word was-being with God, ...and the Word was-being God. John’s simple language is very precise. There are several different Greek words that could be translated as “with”. There is an “along-side of” kind of with, a “together-with” kind of with. Here, the word is sort of a “towards-with”, like almost an extension of, but indivisible from. It is the perfect word to describe the Word’s relationship with God. **The Word is God, but there is more to God than just the**

Word. The Thought is God, but there is more to God than just Thought. Or, your right arm is you, but there is more to you than your right arm. Word pictures and analogies fail to fully capture the relationship, but it is important to see that **there are two unique Realities or Persons that somehow are One Being, yet somehow distinguishable.**

The next progression in John's argument is that "all things came into being through Him". This again is very careful language. The word, "through" signifies "by means of". It refers to *agency*. The NT contains three great Christological passages: John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1. In all three, the language is consistent. Although these were written by three separate individuals, the Holy Spirit carefully directed them to choose the same language to express that **all things were created by means of Christ**, the eternal Word (cf. Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:2). If you think back to the creation story in Genesis, in each case God "said", ...and whatever He *spoke* came into being (1:3,6,9,11,14, 20,24,26). This is acknowledged in Hebrews 11:3 and in II Peter 3:5. **God created everything out of nothing through speaking! All things were created "by means of" the Spoken-Word of God.** One other passage is significant for our consideration. In I Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul is arguing that idols are not real, after all. "There is no God but one", the true Creator-God, citing Isaiah 44:6,8. He goes on to say, "For even if there are so-called 'gods', whether in heaven or on earth-- as there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'--⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, *out-from* whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things, and we *through* Him." Note the distinction: **All things originate from the Father, but are created by means of Christ.**

Now John begins to get poetic. He says that there was "life" in the Word. The word for "life" here is a word that can mean physical life, but more often **this refers to the supernatural life that comes from God.** Clearly that is John's meaning here, because this "life was-being the Light of humanity". John likes to use the images of light and darkness for good and evil, ...or the truth and the lie, ...or the things of God versus the things of the devil (Jn. 3:19-21; I Jn. 1:5; cf. Lk. 1:78). Light also refers to revelation and understanding of the truth (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,36). **The revelatory light of God's Life shines in the darkness, and, though the darkness wants to blot it out, it is unable to do so.** Darkness cannot blot out Light. Light always dissipates darkness. **This true Light (from the Word) enlightens every person, to some degree,** John declares (vs. 9). Even though this Light was-being here, and the world itself had been created by Him, the world did not recognize or acknowledge His presence (vs. 10).

He came to His own, the ones He had made, and they did not receive Him (vs. 11). There is a definite change in focus and emphasis beginning with this last sentence. In verses 9 and 10, John is describing an *ongoing* presence of the Light to give spiritual revelation and awareness of God, accompanied by an *ongoing* condition of spiritual dullness and rejection. The verb in **verse 11 speaks of a definite coming of the Light to "His own" and they "did not receive Him"**. This seems to be a foreshadowing of the events to come in this gospel account. **John is saying that "the Light" actually came! But, when He came, His own created people did not "take Him to themselves", or "accompany Him". He came, but they rejected Him!**

However, some did not reject Him. To the ones who received Him, to them He gave the legal-authority, power and privilege to become children of God. This is the gospel in miniature. If we take this Light, He will make us His people, ...even His family-members! "...to the ones believing unto His name" – **this gift comes to those who trust in God's offer of Life.** Note what follows: "...who were born not out from blood, nor out from the will of the flesh, nor out from the will of man, ...rather out from God they were born." **As if to emphasize the grace/faith foundation of this gospel message, John lists commonly accepted alternatives that people hoped or trusted in. You do not get to be part of God's family by virtue of blood connections.** Your relatives can't help you obtain entrance into God's household, except to tell you the same gospel hope and promise. God has no grandchildren, so the faith history of previous generations means nothing as far as your personal standing with God. Each person comes the same way, by taking the Eternal Word, Creator, Master, as Savior and Light of Revelation for your own soul. If you take Him, by choosing to follow Him and trusting Him, then He will give you the legal right and privilege to become part of His family. Note, that you cannot come by the will of the flesh. **You cannot earn your way by self-effort, or good works, or religious acts of service.** It is only by trusting in the Word. Note, too, that **it is not by the determination of any other person or persons. No one can contrive or create a humanly devised way to become a child of God.** Only God can do this work. Those who take the Word, the Light, the Life have the legal right, authority and privilege to become children of God.

Finally in verse 14, we discover that **the Word actually became flesh and lived among us. We beheld His radiant splendor** (Heb. 1:3), just like one might observe the radiant splendor of a unique son of a father and learn much about his family. **What did we see, as we observed Him?** The things that predominately stood out above all else about the Eternal Word can be summed up in two words: **Grace and Truth. In verse 17, we finally find out that this Eternal Word is Jesus Christ.** Grace and truth came to be through Him. The problem was that no one had ever seen God, so the unique God (the Word) who was "with God", in His very bosom, has come to make Him known.

He wants to do the same with *you*. **God wants you to be bearers of His radiant splendor, so as people observe you they will see what your heavenly Father is like, and be drawn to want to meet Him and become part of the family.**