

The Gospel of John 1:1 - 4<sup>1</sup> introduces the most basic of truths that separates Christianity from all other religions: the **uniqueness of Jesus Christ**.

Genesis 1:1 starts us at the Beginning and the message is clear: at the Beginning God **always had been**. This same God created the universe. He also said "Let us make...",<sup>2</sup> the very first reference to the Trinity. John amplifies this theme by introducing us to **the Logos**. All this was *before* time or the universe were created. We really, as mortals, have no frame of reference for this. Nevertheless, it is true and John gives us the "big picture" about the universe and time and the true nature of Jesus Christ. The whole book is like a toccata and fugue, where the toccata declares in clear thunderous tones the true nature of our Savior, the Logos at the creation. Then, as the book unfolds chapter by chapter, verse by verse, the most wondrous of fugues - themes, counterpoints, the richest of fugues in heaven and earth develops this **truth** of Jesus' person.

**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.** John 1:14 KJV.

John masterfully, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, plays to us the theme of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the God-Man - richly illustrated with accounts of Jesus' life, until the mighty crescendo in John 20:28 where "doubting Thomas" exclaims "...my Lord and my God." There is so much!<sup>3</sup>

Then the final chord:

**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.** John 21:25, KJV.

No small wonder! An infinite God incarnate in human flesh in union that defies all human rationale.

#### **My Own translation of John 1:1 - 4**

Before we go any further I would like to share with you a translation that I did many years ago on what I call a position paper of the Nature of Jesus Christ. This was taken from the original and doesn't make for good English but the purpose was to put in writing my understanding of the original of our text of interest in this lesson. Here goes:

**<sup>[1]</sup> On the occasion of the beginning of time eternally was the Word. And the Word was forever in intimate, reciprocal, communion with**

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<sup>1</sup> Verse 5 is still a work in progress after over 10 years. These 5 verses are so profound that I may have to wait until my retirement so that I can have the time to finish this "work."

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:26a

<sup>3</sup> Read also verses 30 and 31.

the [other persons of the ] Triune God and God was the Word.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>[2]</sup> This One [and no other]<sup>5</sup> eternally was [on the occasion of the Beginning] in intimate, reciprocal communion with [the one and only God. <sup>[3]</sup> All things were made to pass from nothingness to existence through Him; and apart from His agency not even one single thing passed from nothing into existence which has become. <sup>[4]</sup> Summed up in Him was the essence of Life and the Life was eternally the Light, the Luminary of the men.

### The Person of the Word

John's Gospel is the ultimate book on the Person of Jesus Christ. So many times I have heard from Bible students that the Gospel of John teaches the divine nature of Jesus Christ. I have no argument with that assertion except I do not think it is the sum of John's theme. I would rather teach that the Gospel of John teaches about the Person of Jesus Christ, which includes His divine nature. Who can dispute that the humanity of Jesus Christ is not strongly emphasized by such passages as John 11:35 where He wept over the death of His friend Lazarus - and again in verse 38, His grieved emotionally while being led to Lazarus's grave - it was obvious to those around Him that His humanity was very much in evidence.

#### Insert – the Humanity of Jesus Christ as Illustrated by Lazarus' Death.

I wish to insert a comment here about Death and the weeping of Christ because of Lazarus' death. The weeping of Christ says so much about the entire subject of death. True, his friend Lazarus had died and Jesus was crying for him and Lazarus' family. Perhaps the pain Lazarus experienced is in the picture here, but I think Jesus' weeping brings into focus much more than this. Death through the millennia has stood in the way of fellowship between God and man. I think Jesus wept for more than the death of his friend – I think he was weeping for all of mankind. Death is the ultimate enemy. Death is the ultimate barrier. Death is the ultimate separation that keeps our loving God from lavishing His love upon man.

But the humanity of must never be separated from His divine nature<sup>6</sup> – His whole person was also much in evidence when He spoke "Lazarus, come forth" and Lazarus was made alive and walked out of the grave under his own power. I do not think it was

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<sup>4</sup> Normally this phrase would be translated "...and the Word was God.." The position of God *before* the Word gives strong emphasis on the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The anarthrous use of the original for God lends to the *divine nature* of the Word. It could be translated "and the Word was divine in nature" but I'm reluctant to express it that way. The JW's are completely wrong to say that Jesus was a *god* from this anarthrous use of *theos*.

<sup>5</sup> The Greek *outos* is a demonstrative pronoun with strong emphasis. There is no really good English word for it. You may say "This One", underline it and capitalize the 'One.' One thing is for certain: John is not allowing for anyone else but Jesus Christ, The Logos.

<sup>6</sup> Evidence of the essence of Life which is summed up in Him. See vs. 4a.

an accident that John brought both of these points into the narrative for he was writing about the whole Person of Jesus Christ not just His divine nature.

The Mystical union of Jesus Christ is not a doctrine that hidden in the closet of some extreme Christian denomination. No. It is a basic *major* doctrine of the church and I have to wonder if the average Christian was asked to explain the doctrine if words would fail that person. This mystical union of the divine and the human is so much in evidence throughout the book of John.

Before we leave this section I would like to propose three points that John makes in this section. John us makes three statements regarding the Person of Jesus Christ.

1. The Logos, Jesus Christ, was eternally existing at and before the creation.
2. The Logos was forever in intimate, reciprocal communion with the other Persons of the Trinity.
3. The Logos was always divine. He was never less than God in essence.

These are the most basic of axioms necessary to understand Jesus' **uniqueness** - His person.

### **The Eternal Existence of the Word.**

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** John 1:1.<sup>7</sup>

My working translation: "On the occasion of the beginning of time..." This whole section is so profound. What John is talking about here is the creation of the universe *and* time itself. The original gives a special emphasis on the preposition "in." It can be translated as I have done so - the Amplified treats this in an interesting way: "**IN THE beginning [before all time]...**" We must compare John's statement here with his statement in his epistle:

"**That which was from the beginning,...**" 1 John 1:1. Vincent make a statement about this comparison that I could not possibly improve upon:

*"The difference is that by the words 'in the beginning' the writer places himself at the initial point of creation, and, looking back into eternity, describes that which was already in existence when creation began. 'The Word was in the beginning.' In the words 'from the beginning,' the writer looks back to the initial point of time, and describes what has been in existence from that point onward. Thus, 'in the beginning' characterizes the absolute divine Word as He was before the foundation of the world and at the foundation of the world. 'From the beginning' characterizes His development in time.*<sup>8</sup>

Lenski refers to this "in" as timeless.<sup>9</sup> In = Eternity.

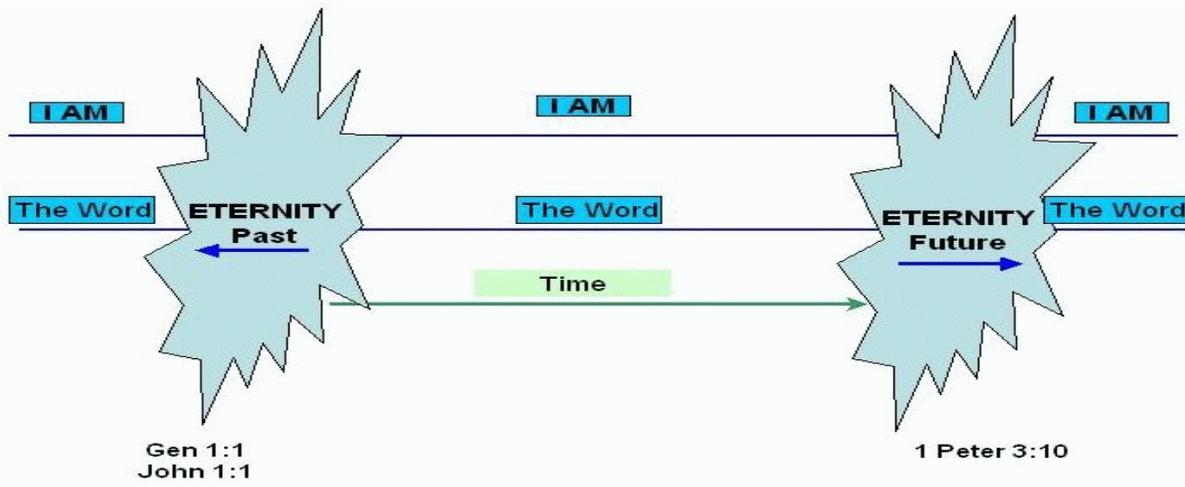
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<sup>7</sup> All passages will be KJV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>8</sup> Vincent, Word Studies In the New Testament, vol II, Pg. 304, 305.

<sup>9</sup> Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, Pg. 28, Par. 1.

I would like to diagram it this way:



So John, in these two references, gives us not only the picture of an eternal Logos (Word), but I think he was consistent with his awareness that man is going to tend either come down on one of two sides of His Person - the human or the divine nature of Christ instead of His real Person - the unique God-Man Who is superior to both time and the universe. This why he frequently mixes both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus in his narratives and statements. In his gospel he picks the occasion of the creation and looks backward into eternity and sees an eternally existing Logos (Word). In his epistle he picks up this theme and looks downward from the beginning of time throughout history to the incarnation and writes of his own, correct viewpoint of His Person.

**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; 1 John 1:1, my emphasis.**

"...was the Word..." This really is the "big picture." All of human history - all of the universe all of the progression from creation down through time itself culminating in the end of the universe as we know it is inferior to the existence of Jesus Christ. Man, especially the theologians tend to put Jesus' Person "in a box." Again, the doctrine of the Mystical Union is *not* doctrine that is strange to the thinking of the church fathers - rather it is a doctrine that has not been properly emphasized in the church. This portion of God's word does just that. I have spent all this time just exegeting the first part of John 1:1. John commented on the whole subject of the person of Jesus Christ in this way:

**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.**  
John 21:25.

I echo those words.

### **The Uniqueness of the Word Expanded.**

Jesus Christ is the Unique God-Man of the universe - which statement may itself be

not quite accurate for He *created* the universe. That means that He *transcends* the universe. That He is the Unique God-Man cannot be refuted. Remember our diagram?

In His statement to the apostate Jewish leaders He states the timelessness of His person:

**Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.** John 8:58.

This is an inarguable statement made by Jesus, Himself. In saying this, Jesus places Himself superior to time - He, as a person, is eternal. So, we move on to the next point in this series - the Person of Jesus Christ. Let us take another look at John 1:1b: "...**the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**"

I'd like to spend a little time around this use of the Greek word "*logos*" that is translated "Word" in English.

### **A Comparison of St. John's and Philo's Concept of The Logos.**

John's concept of The Logos is that of a Person transcending time, both beginning and end. The Logos was more than transcended time He created time and the universe. Jesus said of Himself **"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."** Rev. 1:8

Another of His "I Am" statements. This refers to His timelessness but more than this - note the appellation He gives to Himself "The Almighty." This was not just tacked on to lend considerable weight to the fact that He *was* the beginning and the ending. I believe it is referring to His sovereignty and His power over time. And rightly so, for Paul points out that all *things* were created.

**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: [17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.** Col. 1:16-17

**The all things.** So John has Jesus as a person - the person who transcends both time and material and for that matter, all *things*. He has all the qualities of personality; intellect, creativity, sensibility, likes and dislikes. He is capable of love - being God, He *is* Love.<sup>10</sup> He is capable of wrath - displeasure. He longs to be in intimate contact with those whom He loves.<sup>11</sup>

Philo, on the other hand, limits the Logos to the existence of the universe - Philo's Logos depends on the universe for his purpose - excuse for existence. A far more limited definition of the Logos. I like Vincent's description of this disagreement between the two men.

*"The two notions differ as to origin. The impersonal God of Philo cannot pass to*

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<sup>10</sup> 1 John 4:8.

<sup>11</sup> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37

*the finite creation without contamination of his divine essence. Hence an inferior agent must be interposed. John's God, on the other hand, is personal, and a loving personality. He is a Father (i.18); His essence is love (iii.16; 1 Jn iv.8, 16). He is in direct relation with the world which He desires to save, and the Logos is He Himself. Manifest in the flesh. According to Philo, the Logos is not coexistent with the eternal God. Eternal matter is before him in time. According to John, the Logos is essentially with the Father from all eternity (i.2), and it is He who creates all things, matter included (i.3).*

*"Philo misses the moral energy of the Hebrew religion as expressed in its emphasis upon the holiness of Jehovah, and therefore fails to perceive the necessity of a divine teacher and Savior. He forgets the wide distinction between God and the world, and declares that, were the universe to end, God would die of loneliness and inactivity."<sup>12</sup>*

So we see that Jesus Christ in His preincarnate state was always *with* God, the Father and the Holy Spirit (in his procession) denoting the Trinity but that He was always God. There is never any diminishing of His divinity that is superior to but in direct relation to His creation. He was "**...with God**, and the Word was God.

#### **Jesus, a Person of Intimacy.**

My working translation: "And the Word was forever in intimate, reciprocal, communion with [the Triune] God."

The Greek from our KJV phrase "**...the Word was *with* God,...**" the English word "with" is translated from the Greek preposition *pros*. The English "with" does not accurately picture *pros*. *Pros* denotes fact-to-face - meaning inseparable communion. This is not merely occupation in the same area, but the closest possible communion - an eternal divine embrace. Lenski says "...with a strong note of reciprocity..."<sup>13</sup> Other prepositions that can be translated *with* are:

*sun*, meaning together, with (we are in the same classroom, that would be "*sun*.")

*para*, meaning - beside, with (if I were to ask someone in the room to stand here with me, that would be "*para*.")

Here John utterly refutes any notion that Jesus was ever out of personal, intimate communion with the Father. Cults such as the Jehovah Witnesses are forced to distort this passage.

So far, my working translation goes this way.

On the occasion of the Beginning of creation, eternally was the Word, and the Word was forever in intimate, reciprocal communion with [the Triune] God....

#### **A discussion of the *kai* (the English word "and").**

*Gk. Kai*, copulative. Many times this word is brushed aside by Bible students like an unimportant beggar in a busy market. However, the copulative use of *kai* is so important as it bonds each of these propositions together with an Eternal epoxy. Here is how I'd like to diagram the use of *kai* in this statement by John:

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<sup>12</sup> Vincent, Word Studies In the New Testament, vol II, Pg. 32 Par 1 & 2.

<sup>13</sup> Page 32, Par 1.

Proposition #1, the Eternality of Jesus Christ

*Inseparable epoxy bond between #1 / #2.*

Proposition #2, the Intimacy of Jesus Christ

*Inseparable epoxy bond between #2 / #3.*

Proposition #3, the Essence of Jesus Christ

In the beginning <b>was</b> the word
and
the Word <b>was</b> with God
and
the Word <b>was</b> God.

1. The durative imperfect of *eimi [en]* in all three propositions teach an eternal state.
2. In proposition #1, the Eternality of the Logos. Jesus existed on the occasion of the creation - in fact, vs. 3 teaches that the Logos was the agent of creation!
3. In proposition #2, the Intimacy of the Logos. The preposition *pro [gk]* with the durative imperfect of *eimi*, teaches a close, eternal, fact-to-face relation with the other members of the Godhead (vs. 1b).
4. Lastly, in proposition #3, The Essence of the Logos. The true interpretation of the anarthrous "*theos en ho logos*" must point to the quality or essence of the Logos, i.e. Literally, the Word was eternally divine. "In the third proposition, the Word was God, the article was omitted because *theos* described the nature of the Word and did not identify his person. Here, as in the second proposition, the word is placed in personal relation to God."<sup>14</sup>

Again, the durative imperfect of *eimi* must mean that there never was a time when the Logos - the second person of the Godhead was less than divine. By definition, divine can only refer to God, not some created super-being somewhere between angels and God.<sup>15</sup>

Let's look at the articular use of these nouns as they appear in the third proposition:

Articular	<i>ho logos</i> (The Word)	Points to the Person of Christ
Anarthrous (no article)	<i>theos</i> (God)	Describes the quality, essence of the Word (when the context allows, <i>theos</i> without the article can be translated "divine.")

### The Word's Intimate Relationship with the Godhead.

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

My working translation of verse 2:

This One [and no other] eternally was [on the occasion of the beginning] in intimate, reciprocal, communion with [the Triune] God.

<sup>14</sup> Vincent, Word Studies In The New Testament, vol II, Pg 35, Par. 3

<sup>15</sup> As Philo and later, the Gnostics try to teach.

**Comments on "The same..."** The Greek *outos* is a demonstrative pronoun with strong emphasis. There is no English word for it. You may say "This One" - underline it and use uppercase for the 'One.' Be sure of this; John is not allowing for anyone else but Jesus Christ, the Logos.

**The three purposes of verse two.**

1. That of emphasis for proposition #1 & 2. "This One, the only one - no other, amplifies proposition #3.
2. That of unification of thought. The tying together of all three propositions in one simple yet sublime thought.
3. That of transition from the Person of Jesus Christ to that of His work.

Next lesson we move on to the work of Jesus Christ in creation.

**The Humanity of Jesus Christ.**

For our next section we need to turn to Hebrews 2. Let us take a look at verse 10.

**For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.** Hebrews 2:10 (KJV).

**For it became him,...** Here we take our transition into the humanity of Jesus Christ and how necessary it was. "**For it became him,...**" My emphases. Other translations: "...it was fitting... NIV, NAS; "...it makes good sense..." The Message; "**For it was becoming to Him...**" YLT.

Vincent comments – "**Not logical necessity ( $\delta\epsilon$ , v. 1), nor obligation growing out of circumstances ( $\omega\phi\epsilon\iota\lambda\epsilon\nu$ , v. 17), but an inner fitness in God's dealing. Dr. Robertson Smith observes: "The whole course of nature and grace must find its explanation in God; and not merely in an abstract divine arbitrium, but in that which befits the divine nature."**<sup>16</sup> Not only was Jesus Christ to take upon himself humanity for the sake of becoming our Kinsman Redeemer but doing so was in perfect keeping with the very nature of God for this to be so. We must not base our thinking of this necessity as an expediency but as perfect in keeping with the very nature of God.

So this whole idea of the incarnation was a perfect union of satisfying the requirements of redemption but it was in perfect keeping with who and what God is. This is the perfect "solution" if you please.

Now we enter the whole idea of the centrality of the Person of Christ and the perfect relevance of redemptive history. All of history, indeed, creation is so because of the creative action of Christ and exists for His purpose. The amazing thing is that we figure centrally in His purpose. We exist and are redeemed because of the supreme importance Jesus Christ places in us His Brethren. Not only was the universe created for and by him but the universe was created so that we might live in it. Redemptive history is tied up in the phrase "**... in bringing many sons into glory,...**"

I want to emphasize that God was not merely *required* to send his Beloved Son into the world by way of incarnation but that it was a "good 'fit'" within His Eternal Plan that it be so. This also emphasizes the sovereignty that God has over history – Redemptive History. An important part of this plan was that The Son was to become a Man so that

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<sup>16</sup> —Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament.

he could be related in such a way that He could become the Kinsman Redeemer that we just studied about in the book of Ruth.

***In bringing many sons unto glory (πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγὼν)***

***Const. bringing with him; not with captain, which would mean "to perfect the captain, etc., as one who led many sons, etc." Ἀγαγὼν is not to be explained who had brought, or after he had brought, with a reference to the O.T. saints, "he had brought many O.T. sons of God unto glory"; but rather, bringing as he did, or in bringing, as A.V. Many sons, since their leader himself was a son. Unto glory, in accordance with the glory with which he himself had been crowned (v. 9). The glory is not distinguished from the salvation immediately following. For the combination salvation and glory see 2 Timothy 2:10; Revelation 19:1.***

**—Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament**

The whole focus of history is the bringing 'many' (all of believing mankind) sons (Jesus Christ's Identification of himself as the unique Son of Man to sinful man – to be brought unto Glory. I've said this many time – the *only* reason for history is so that these 'many' might be restored in right relationship with their brother, Jesus Christ.

Vincent make an important comment regarding the "perfection" of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation:

***To make perfect (τελειῶσαι)***

***Lit. to carry to the goal or consummation. The "perfecting" of Jesus corresponds to his being "crowned with glory and honor," although it is not a mere synonym for that phrase; for the writer conceives the perfecting not as an act but as a process. "To make perfect" does not imply moral imperfection in Jesus, but only the consummation of that human experience of sorrow and pain through which he must pass in order to become the leader of his people's salvation. —Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament***

This is such a glorious thought – to make perfect! Take all the sorrow of man's sinful journey through history – all the pain, the tears – now take the sorrow of Jesus in His journey through history to complete His mission as the redeemer of mankind. Take this whole tapestry of redemptive history and now look at the finished 'product' – the perfection of God's Redemptive Plan and we must view the glorious result: *his people's salvation*.

We will continue this lesson next time as the Lord permits.