
JOHN 1:14 : GOD'S SUPREME REVELATION [1]

"The Word"

No. EE105

Without doubt John 1:14 is one of the most astounding verses in the whole of Scripture. It opens up to us awesome truths of such richness that we will need to look at it more than once. To start off with, let us concentrate on the first two words only: "The Word ..." (NIV).

THE WORD

❑ We will not properly understand v.14 unless we also take cognisance of v.1 - and especially of the vitally important concept of "the Word".

If we look at vv. 2-13 as being in parentheses, the apostle's idea becomes clear: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... (and the) Word became flesh..."

❑ According to Jn 20:30-31 it is John's intention to lead both Jews and non-Jews to faith with his writing: the Jews, by persuading them that Jesus is, in fact, the long-awaited Christ; and the non-Jews, by getting them to understand that Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son.

❑ With the introduction of his grand theme the apostle is faced with a huge dilemma. The terms "Christ" and "Son of God" are loaded concepts for his readers, and he has no intention of losing some of them right at the onset, or creating false concepts in the minds of others.

The Jews will most certainly be all ears when they realise that he is writing about the Christ. But they are expecting a Messiah with an earthly mission, with almost exclusively political aims. But John realises the vital importance of getting them to understand that Jesus is truly God.

And as for the heathen, when they read about the "Son of God", they would be sure to think of someone supposedly born out of the union between one of the gods and an earthly woman - a common theme in Greek mythology. And what blasphemy that would be!

No, John wants to make sure that his readers understand that the One about whom he is writing, is absolutely unique and exalted - not just one of many, not just another messiah, not just any Christ; and certainly not just another heathen idol.

❑ That is why the apostle, before he even starts explaining that the Lord Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, clearly and unequivocally drives home the point that *the Person about whom he is writing is truly and fully God!*

However, in order to avoid any misunderstanding he must first call his Main Character by another name; not "Christ" or "Son of God". And here John is led by the Holy Spirit to make a brilliant choice. He calls Him "the Word" (Gr. *Logos*). To both Jew and Greek this term is loaded with meaning. Unlike the other terms, *Logos* evokes the loftiest of ideas in the minds of both types of readers.

- Among the heathen the concept of the *Logos* was quite common. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (600 B.C.) taught that the *Logos* was the soul of the universe - the creative energy from which everything originated, who regulates everything, maintains everything, and keeps the entire universe in equilibrium.

The more contemporary Stoics expanded the concept. To them the *Logos* was the omnipresent wisdom through which everything was created and

is being directed.

The heathen associated the *Logos* with the most high God. John therefore knows that his choice of terminology will ensure that his pagan readers will understand that he is writing to them about the all-sufficient Originator of everything - the uncaused cause of everything.

- The Jews had even stronger associations with the idea of the *Logos*. For them John's introductory words (v.1) would bring to mind the very first words of Genesis, "In the beginning..."

And, of course, the concept *Logos*, or *Word*, would remind them of God's creation of the world. The expression "And God said" appears nine times in Gen 1. In fact, to the Jews *Logos* had the meaning of God's almighty, creating word.

In Ps 33:6, 9 we read, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth ... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." And in Isa 55:11, "... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

From the above it is clear that when God speaks, He does something. Thus the Jews also associated the term *Logos* with Godly action.

Moreover, the Jews regarded it as a sign of disrespect to use God's name when talking about Him, and preferred to refer to Him in indirect terms such as "the Holy One", "the Name", or "the Word".

By using the term "*Logos*" John is therefore saying to the Jews: *He is the One I am writing about - He, the omnipotent and holy Creator of heaven and earth.*

THE EXALTEDNESS OF THE WORD

❑ In the verses preceding v.14 John makes at least 8 statements about the exaltedness of the Word, each of which would be acceptable to every thinking Jew and Greek.

- *In the beginning was the Word* (1). The form of the verb in Greek (Imperfect Tense) points towards the passage of time in the past. In other words, when time and everything that exists came into being, the Word already existed. He was there from all eternity.

- *The Word was with God* (1) (again the Imperfect Tense). The Word has always been with God. From all eternity there has been an intimate association between them.

- *The Word was God* (1) (still the Imperfect Tense). Yes, the Word is distinct from God, yet He is not a created being. In fact, He has been God from all eternity. Here John is touching on the differences within the unity of the Godhead. But none of his unbelieving readers would realize it.

- *Through Him all things were made* (3, 10). The statement that He is the Creator of the universe would not have bothered the Jews nor the Greeks.

- *In Him was life* (4). There is no living creature in creation that has not received life from the Word as life-giving power and source of everything.

- *That life was the light of men* (4, 9). John is already here alluding to the fact that the Word is the Revealer of God. But the pagans would have interpreted the statement philosophically, while the Jews would have seen it as a personification of wisdom, in the light of Proverbs 8.

- *His own did not receive Him* (11). The reader would agree, saying to himself that there will always be fools among us who never think and never comprehend.

- *There are however some who accept Him* (12). "Indeed!", the readers would have congratulated themselves.

Surely, no author can introduce the main character of his book in a loftier manner to his readers!

APPLICATION

□ *We must be careful not to miss the strong emphasis placed in the New Testament on the deity of Christ.*

It is only too easy to think of Him merely as that wonderful man from Nazareth, who has set such a wonderful example to us by the loving and caring way in which He lived. Yes, the Word did indeed become flesh, and He was and still is fully man - but without this strong emphasis by John our Christology easily becomes watered down to a man-centred caricature which is totally irreconcilable with Biblical revelation.

The pale, effeminate Jesus of Medieval art, and the sentimental Jesus of so much of today's preaching, cannot save anybody. And such a man-made Christ is very definitely not the King of kings and the Lord of lords of whom John writes elsewhere - in Revelation.

□ *We would do well to remember that the New Testament authors present us with a Jesus who is both truly God, and a living Person.*

He is therefore infinitely more than the impersonal principle or power of John's heathen readers.

Luke also uses the expression "the word". He refers to the apostles as those "who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:2, NIV). Does he mean the Lord Jesus or the gospel? Some translations would appear to attach the latter meaning to the term, although Luke talks of the apostles as being "eye-witnesses" of the word, which would seem to suggest that he is in fact talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. But he also calls them "servants" of the word, which could suggest the gospel.

This was not an issue in the early church,

because to those Christians *the person of Jesus Christ was in fact the content of the gospel!*

This is exactly what Paul means when he states, "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified..." (1 Cor 1:22-23), and, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). Last but not least, we read in Gal 3:1: "Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified". Therefore, although talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle is really referring to the contents of his sermons.

One who has come to know the risen, living and glorified Christ can never again proclaim anything or anybody else - least of all moralism or goodwill or nice-sounding sentiment. For such humanistic nonsense not one of the apostles would have been prepared to die (and died they certainly did - as martyrs). But they simply could not refrain from talking about God who became man and dwelt among them.

That is how it has been through the ages. That is how it is now. That is how it will be forever.

Being a Christian is indeed a way of life, but not in the first place. Primarily it is a holy obsession with a Person - the Word of God, the first source of everything, God's highest revelation to man, the Son of God and God the Son.

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