

John 1:1 - 18 The Prologue

V. 1: 'In the beginning', an allusion to Genesis 1:1, which is not merely typological; 'was', the Greek imperfect tense denotes continuity; 'the Word', together with Wisdom and the Spirit (*ruah*) believed to have been with God from the start according to Jewish OT thought and stands, therefore for God's presence, manifestation and revelation, rather than divine speech according to Hellenistic thinking. Hence, according to John, Christ, as the Incarnate Word of God is the ultimate and full revelation of God; 'with God', literally, 'in the presence of God', the article 'the' before 'God' in the Greek, distinguishes its godhead; 'the Word was God', no article 'the' before 'God', as the Word although divine is not all divinity, because he has already been distinguished from another divine Person (Jn. 7:28, 8:42, 16:28)

V. 2: 'was with God in the beginning', 'was' Greek imperfect.

V. 3: 'Through him', Christ is not the Creator, the Word is instrumental, meditative; 'not one thing ...', repetition of the same truth.

V. 4: 'All that came to be', may be joined with 'not one thing (of all that came to be) had its being but through him; 'life', not merely existence, but sharing God's being.; 'that life was the light of men', sharing in God's being must be a life of the ultimate understanding, the revelation of God.

V. 5: 'a light that shines in the dark', dark being the antithesis of 'light', i.e. anything opposed to God.

V. 6: 'a man came', John the Baptist's relevance is due to his having been sent by God like the prophets.

V. 7: 'as a witness to speak for the light', 'witness' one of John's fundamental ideas, e.g. the Samaritan woman in John 4.; 'so that everyone might believe', belief and unbelief under the influence of darkness make up the theme of the first half of the Gospel.

V. 8: 'He was not the light', to clarify those who had not understood that the Baptist was just the precursor of the Incarnate Word.

V. 9: 'the true light', in Hebraic refers to the divine order, as opposed to the deceptive and illusory order of the 'world', which is also understood as a mere reflection of the *primaeva* world of reality; 'coming into the world', refers more likely to 'all men'.

V. 10: 'the world did not know him', in Semitic terms 'know' presupposes personal involvement not just knowledge and ,therefore, refers not only to the rejection of Christ by his own people, but also refusal to acknowledge God's truth throughout the history of salvation, e.g. the creation, the prophets.

V. 11: 'his own domain', the Word is now 'rejected' by his own people.

V.12: 'to become children of God', rejection of the Word was never complete and John elaborates on how to become a child of God in the second part of the Gospel; 'believe in the name', like 'to know', it presupposes personal involvement.

V.13: 'who was born ... but of God himself', plural verb in Greek', which would refer to 'children of God', but if kept in singular would refer to the Incarnate word and allude to the virginal birth of Christ.

V.14: 'flesh' all that is transitory, weak, mortal and imperfect.to emphasise that the word took on the fullness of humanity, except sin; 'he lived among us', literally, pitched his tent among us', as God dwelt in a tent among the wandering Israelites and probably too to God's presence in the Holy of Holies. Through the Incarnation, God is now visible to mankind;' the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father', John here is specifying Christ's glory which is that of Saviour, which he will elaborate in the second part of the Gospel; 'full of grace and truth', 'grace' refers to the 'kindness' that God exercised to Israel in election and covenant, and 'truth', God's faithfulness in carrying out his covenant promises.

V.15: 'because he existed before me', or 'he was before me', John is the first witness of the Incarnate Word; the text is an interruption of the poetic phase of the Prologue.

V.16: 'grace in return for grace', i.e. the riches which we, as the Church have shared are those in which the Son, according to v. 14, is rich; or 'grace upon grace', i.e. that which was promised in the Old Covenant has now come even more abundantly in the revelation of the Son of God.

V.17: John's final break with Judaism, in the sense that in the OT, 'grace' was considered as the deeds of God's love and 'truth', as the Law, have now been fulfilled in God's revelation through the coming of his Son.

V.18: 'No one has ever seen God', for the Jews, God was always an 'invisible' God (Exodus 33:20-23), who is now completely revealed in the Incarnate Son.; 'nearest to God's heart', literally, 'who is in the Father's bosom', denotes the level of intimacy, a true community of love.