

December 1, 2024

“Jesus, the Word of God”  
John 1:1-3

FCF: Longing for God.

**PROPOSITION** (magnet) Jesus is the eternal Word of God.  
(anchor) Through Him, we can know God.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

Some of you know there are two quests in C. S. Lewis’ *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. The first is to find the seven lords of Narnia who disappeared during the reign of wicked King Miraz. The second is to reach Aslan’s country at the end of the world over the Eastern Ocean. Reepicheep, the brave loyal mouse, has had a longing stirred deep within him (**READ**):

*"When I was in my cradle, a wood woman, a Dryad, spoke this verse over me: 'Where sky and water meet, Where the waves grow sweet, Doubt not, Reepicheep, To find all you seek, There is the utter East. I do not know what it means. But the spell of it has been on me all my life.'"*

You and I know this spell all too well. There’s a restless sense of home that pulls upon us. It’s stirred by a song, an experience, a memory. We may suppress it but it just keeps coming up.

What’s going on there? It’s a homing signal. We were made to know the One who made us. Here’s the question. Is that a hopeless quest? Can we really know God? And, if so, how?

With that, we are starting our Advent series, looking at the prologue of John’s Gospel.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** **John 1:1-3**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

It has been said that John’s Gospel is (**READ**) “*a pool safe enough for a child to wade in and deep enough for an elephant to drown.*” It is simple enough to be an introduction to the Christian faith. It is profound enough that we can spend a lifetime exploring its themes. The Prologue is a foyer to the rest of John’s Gospel, simultaneously introducing the major themes and drawing the reader in. This is a bit different than the introductions in Matthew and Luke. John tells how “the Word,” who was with God in the beginning, came into the sphere of history, into time and space. Over the next few weeks, we’re going to spend some time here in this foyer.

What is it we see here as we first walk into the great hall? Simply but profoundly this – Jesus is the eternal Word of God. And through Him, we can know God. We can know God.

That said, what does it mean to say Jesus is “the eternal Word of God”? At least this much, these two things. Jesus is the Word before all things and He is the Word behind all things.

**I. THE WORD BEFORE ALL THINGS**

First, Jesus is the Word before all things. How so? For the Jewish reader, this is what they would have immediately heard at the mentioning of “the Word,” “the Logos,” of God.

*A) Background of the Old Testament*

John is assuming some familiarity with the Old Testament and its background.

1. Allusion to Genesis

You can hear the ancient cadence of the opening words of Genesis 1 and the creation account.

2. God’s further acts

Interestingly, “the Word of God” is mentioned in the Old Testament not just in connection with God’s acts in creation but with His acts of revelation to His people and also their deliverance.

### 3. Personification

In other passages of the Old Testament and even more in later Jewish writings, “the Word of God” is personified – represented and spoken of as an individual through whom God works.

### 4. Replacement for divine name

And in synagogue worship of John’s day, instead of the holy name Yahweh, this phrase was used.

All that is to say that John is tapping into all that his Jewish readers would have known and is then going beyond it. Beyond personification, John is saying the Logos is a real person.

### *B) Implications for Understanding*

And that is a game changer. (READ John 1:1) Now what are the implications of this?

#### 1. His eternal being

He is eternal. Jesus, the Logos, cannot be said to have come into being at any given moment in time. As the 4<sup>th</sup> century bishop Athanasius put it (READ), “There never was when He was not.”

#### 2. His full personhood

Eternity. And personality. He was “with God.” Meaning He is a person who has forever been in communion with God. Hints here of unity and diversity – the eternal community of the Trinity.

#### 3. His full deity

Eternity. Personality. And deity. John could not be clearer on this. He is saying here that there is a distinction in persons but not in essence (READ John 1:1-3). Jesus is before all things, the agent of God in creation. He is distinct from creation and all creation is dependent upon Him.

Which is to say that Jesus, the Word of God, is to be honored, adored, and worshipped.

### *Application:*

Whatever else you heard in college or saw on YouTube, know that this wasn’t something added on later in the history of the Church. The ancient councils and creeds merely summarized what had been passed down. It was clearly there at the beginning with this 1<sup>st</sup> century Gospel.

Which speaks to the mystery of Christ. As God, He is infinite and limitless. Not that we cannot know Him but that we cannot know Him exhaustively. We can know Him but there is always more to know. The greatest theologian has only caught a glimpse. And so humility becomes inevitable in following Christ. Which is to say that to know Him is to worship Him.

Do you know that? The supremacy and the mystery of Christ. The Magi were right to travel far, sacrifice much, and bow low before Him. As Bruce Milne said on this text (READ):

If Jesus Christ shares the nature of God, we are called to worship him without cessation, obey him without hesitation, love him without reservation and serve him without interruption. To him be all glory forever.

Jesus is the Logos, the One before all things. And through Him, we can know God.

## **II. THE WORD BEHIND ALL THINGS**

For He is the Word before all things. And He is also the Word behind all things. The first is speaking of the Jewish perspective of the Logos and the second of the Greek perspective.

### A) Background of Greek Philosophy

Now John is likely writing sometime after 70 A.D. from Ephesus in Asia Minor. He is no backwards hick, a country rube. He is aware of and sensitive to Greek philosophical thought.

#### 1. The question

The question they were asking went back to Heraclitus in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Things constantly change. (READ) We “*never step twice into the same river.*” The winds are ever blowing. The seasons are ever changing. The stars are ever moving. How can there be order in the world?

#### 2. The answer

What holds it together? What was the answer? “The Logos,” the word and reason behind it all.

And, here again, John is tapping into the ideas of his readers and going beyond it. Beyond a mere philosophical construct, John is speaking here of the Word becoming flesh.

### B) Implications for Understanding

And again, this is a game changer. What are the implications? Think with me.

#### 1. God’s desire for all to know

First, it says something profound about God’s desire for all to know Him. He is speaking through His apostle, tapping into ideas foreign to the Jewish reader but familiar to the Greek.

#### 2. The meaning to life in this world

And what John is saying to them is, “*Listen, the very thing that has occupied your philosophical thought and about which you have been writing for centuries, ‘the Logos,’ has now come to earth as a man and we have seen Him. He is the meaning to life in this world. And you can hear it in the rich wisdom of His teaching and see it in the restorative power of His miracles.*”

Jesus, the Word of God, is both before all things and behind all things as well.

#### Application:

Thinking in terms of our Christmas celebrations, don’t let appearances fool you. This child is utterly like but infinitely unlike any other. Think of it. This baby in the manger is the One who alone gives meaning to life. Not just then but now. Life does not and can not make sense outside of following Jesus. There is no order or reason without Him. For He is the Logos.

Jesus is the Logos, the One behind all things. And through Him, we can know God.

### CONCLUSION:

Where does that leave us? We should expect to have our expectations of what it means to know Him shaken up. How could it be otherwise? He is the Logos. Could He really be hemmed in by our agenda? Ask John’s audience, the Jew and Greek. And the same holds today.

What would that look like? Embracing Him not only as Savior but as Lord. Bowing before Him not only as one saved once for all by His grace but as one being remade in His image. And bowing is exactly what must be done because of the struggle that process can bring. Another example from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Self-centered, small-minded, mean-spirited Eustace Scrubb has turned into a dragon. And he eventually comes to a point of trying to

get his scales off but soon finds there are yet more scales beneath each layer. Finally, he has to let Aslan the lion peel them away with his terrible claws. Eustace later describes it ([READ](#)):

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.

Eustace is human again. But only through the tearing by Aslan's claws. Some of us can speak to similar times in our own lives. It's not what we expected of Him. But it's what we needed.

The stakes in all this couldn't be higher. Can we know God or not? Yes. Through Jesus, the eternal Word of God. He is the Logos. We dare not turn from Him. We must turn to Him.

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## Lord's Supper

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