

John 1 Opening Verses In Prologue With Greek and Grammar Observations by Thomas Dierson

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Begin:

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. (John 1:1-2)

This is one of the most beautiful, and theologically PACKED passages in the Bible.

"ἐν ἀρχῇ" - "In the beginning".

This not only sets the opening scene of the Gospel of John, but deliberately recalls & connects to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God..." "ἦν" - "was" This verb is in the past continual-action tense, meaning "had been" or "already was".

In the context of "in the beginning", therefore, ἦν takes on an ETERNAL implication of "always had been". This in contrast to the verb ἐγένετο (egeneto) "was", used in verse 6 for John the Baptist which is in the imperfect sense indicating the action began at a specific point.

"ὁ λόγος" - "the Word" The Logos, or Word is introduced as the primary subject of this work. Who or what is this Logos. The term means "Word" or "spoken communication" or "expression". It was used by famed 1st Century Jewish Exegete, Philo of Alexandria, to speak of God's Divine Expression of his Mind. It became personified as something distinct within God that served & expressed God's will & purpose.

John seizes upon this personified Word as the way to reveal something to us about the Nature of God. God is PERSONAL & RELATIONAL within himself. This Logos, or Word, or Divine Expression of God's Self has always existed "In the beginning was the Word" cf "In the beginning God". "καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν" - "and the Word was with God" This creates both a distinction & a relationship. The term "with" indicates that more than one thing is present.

There is some sort of distinction between the Logos & God. Yet the phrase "πρὸς τὸν θεόν", "with God" also indicates closeness & relationship. It means "by the side of, that is, near to, face to face". This is further explained in verse 18 where it defines the relationship as "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father". This is an INTRINSIC relationship within

God's self, not an external relationship. While there is a distinction of some sort, that distinction does not imply OTHERNESS or separation "καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος" - "and the Word was God".

Here is the central claim & theme of John's Gospel. Everything else that comes after this in the entire work is to establish THIS premise. It is one of the most argued over clauses in the whole of Scripture.

This clause tells us that while there is a distinction between the Logos & God ("with God"), the Logos is nonetheless also identified as being GOD HIMSELF ("was God"). This is an example of a Qualitative Equative Clause in Greek.

This is an example of a Qualitative Equative Clause in Greek. An Equative Clause is where two things are being compared to one another linked by a state-of-being verb (is, was, am, are, etc). There are 3 different kinds of Equative Clauses in Greek, Definite, Indefinite & Qualitative.

A Definite Equative Clause equates the two things being compared so that they are interchangeable. So it is an A=B and B=A type comparison. "God=the Word, & the Word=God". In Greek that is represented BY BOTH nouns being compared having the definite article ὁ (ho). It would have been written "καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος". But it wasn't.

An Indefinite Equative Clause is one where the comparison is general, not direct. The two things are GENERALLY SIMILAR or in the same general CATEGORY. That would be rendered as "the Word was A god", or "godlike". This is the translation favored by Jehovah's Witnesses & others who deny the true Divinity of Christ. In Greek, an Indefinite Equative Clause is expressed by NEITHER of the nouns being compared having the definite article "ὁ". So it would have been written as "καὶ θεὸς ἦν λόγος". But it wasn't.

A Qualitative Equative Clause, however, distinguishes between the two nouns, unlike a Definite Equative Clause which makes them interchangeable. But they are understood as having THE EXACT SAME ESSENTIAL QUALITIES. The distinctions between the two are maintained, yet they are QUALITATIVELY the same. The implications of it are that the Logos was "with God" as a distinct Person, yet the Logos has THE EXACT SAME DIVINE NATURE as the Father. In Greek, a Qualitative Equative Clause is indicated by ONE of the two nouns having the definite article "ὁ" while the other noun lacks it. The noun WITH the definite article is identified as the Predicate Nominative, or the subject of the Clause & the other noun is the object. Word order in Greek is less important than it is in English. So although it is written θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, (Lit. "God was the word"), the fact that Logos has the definite article identifies it as the subject of the Clause. So it

can ONLY be translated as "The Word was God". So this phrase, with all its implications, means "the Word had THE EXACT SAME QUALITIES as God".

This is further confirmed by Hebrews 1:3, which says, "He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being". And in John [1:14](#), the Logos is explicitly identified with the man, Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God. "And the Word became Flesh..."

This passage is the most radical, the most amazing, and the most distinctive of all of the claims of Christianity. Not just that God sent a man to die for our sins, but that GOD BECAME FLESH in order to redeem all flesh. The Incarnation is the central claim of Christianity.

Further notes:

The Greek grammar of John 1:1 does NOT support a Modalistic view of God, as it would if it had been written as a Definite Equative Clause (God=the Word) Nor does it support an Arian view as it would if it were an Indefinite Equative Clause ("the Word was A god").

Only a TRINITARIAN view of God is consistent with the Greek grammar of John 1:1. The Qualitative Equative Clause affirms both the Distinctions of the Persons, as well as the Oneness of Essence. It affirms the same Theological principle that "Homoousios" does in the Nicene Creed.

End.

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