

Series: Portraits of Jesus in John	Reference: <i>John 1:1-18</i>	Title: The Word	Date: 01.26.2019
Website Writeup: Who is Jesus to the world? Does God suffer from multiple personality disorder? Or, does He communicate Himself in one way as you would communicate yourself through your unique personality?			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Memory Verses for this Series - about 1 every 2 weeks

¹⁴ The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth. (Jn 1:14)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one & only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit & in truth.” (Jn 4:24)

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (Jn 6:35)

³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn 8:31–32)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (Jn 8:36)

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (Jn 13:34–35)

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (Jn 14:6)

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (Jn 15:5)

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (Jn 20:29)

Over coming weeks we're looking at various portraits of Jesus in the book of John. Matthew, Mark & Luke, the synoptic Gospels 'see together', similar but written from different perspectives. John's gospel stands alone, where as they describe events, John takes it deeper, giving us the *why*. On the inner circle, he had a little more intimacy with Jesus, which comes out in his writing.

Before we look at the passage, let's remember words are important. If I started the quote, "I have a dream..." You'd probably know who said it. Shout out if you know these...

- "We have nothing to fear but fear itself" (Franklin Delano Roosevelt)
- "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" (John F. Kennedy)
- "God is dead, and we have killed him" (Friedrich Nietzsche)
- "You must be the change you want to see in the world" (Mahatma Ghandi)
- "Our constitution was made only for a moral & religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (John Adams)
- "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom." (Benjamin Franklin)
- "Ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with I will not put" (Winston Churchill)
- "The answer to life's questions are not at the bottom of a bottle, they're on TV!" (Homer Simpson)

Words define & reveal who we are, they can't be separated from us. They reflect what we think & feel. Words are thoughts - thought's the defining factor of unity. Words originate from within, a part of us. We are our words & it's why they're so important. Turn to p723 in your Church Bible to John chapter 1 where he uses the concept of the Word to describe Jesus. The word he uses is the Greek word Logos. It begins...

In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

¹⁵ *(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”)*

¹⁶ *Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and ^f is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

John speaks with loaded language here writing to Jews & Greeks. Firstly, let’s consider the Jewish mind. When Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Hebrew OT into Greek (Septuagint, 275 b.c.) they utilized the greek word *logos* to translate the Hebrew word *dabar*.¹ Hebrews saw the Word of God not as merely words, but as a powerful & effectual means of accomplishing God’s purposes (Isa. 40:8; 55:11; Jer. 23:29). By His Word God spoke the world into existence (Gen. 1:3–31; Ps. 33:6; 2 Pet. 3:5). God communicated His Word directly to persons, especially in the Law (Ex. 20:1–17; 34:28; Deut. 5:4–5) and the Prophets (1 Sam. 15:10; 2 Sam. 7:4; 23:2; 2 Kings 7:1; Isa. 38:4; Jer. 1:4, 11; Ezek. 7:1; 11:14; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jon. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Hag. 1:1; Mal. 1:1). The wise person is the one who lives in accordance with the Word of God (Gen. 15:1; Exod. 9:20–25; Num. 3:16; 1 Kings 6:11–12; Pss. 106:24; 119).² To follow God means obedience to his Word since His Word is Himself. To them God’s Word is perfect, powerful, directive, good, with creative & healing power.

To Jews the Word of God was inseparable from God - one & the same - for them, words were extremely important. So, to equate Jesus to the *dabar* of God is to equate Jesus to God Himself, which would be a very hard pill to swallow for a Jew. If it were not true, it would be outright blasphemy. There may not be a clearer testament to the Deity of Jesus than these statements.

Secondly, we consider the Greek mind. The Greek word *logos* didn’t refer to a person, it was an abstract concept. In early Greek thought there was no concept of a personal God who created the world in order & harmony. At best, it was an abstract principle which ordered reality & kept it from becoming a cloud of confusion. They’d call this abstract principle either “*nous*” (mind), or “*logos*.” An impersonal, philosophic principle. The *Logos* wasn’t considered a personal being involved in the world. It was as an abstraction to account for the order evident in the universe.³ There was a duality in their thinking, the material & spiritual kept separate; material world, considered imperfect & spiritual world couldn’t interact with it. *Logos* was given great significance by Greek philosophers. The Stoics strongly emphasized the *logos spermatikos* (“seminal word”), the rational principle which pervades all reality, providing meaning and order to persons &

¹ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

² Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

³ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

the universe. The *logos* creates coherence, unity & provides an orderly pattern for existence holding everything together.⁴

The Stoics whom Paul debated at Mars Hill in Acts 19 had a notion, all things were composed of an ultimate seminal fire, the *Logos Spermaticos*. This seminal word was procreative power; the word that begets life, order & harmony. They were the first to say “*Every person has a spark of divinity in them.*”⁵ You remember Paul went to them noticing an altar to an unknown god & he proclaimed the knowable Logos, Jesus as God.

By the time the Gospels were written, the notion of Logos was a loaded philosophical idea. John dropped a theological bombshell on the philosophical playground by talking about Jesus, NOT as an impersonal concept, but as the incarnation of the eternal Logos. He doesn't use the term in the same way Greeks did. He fills it with Jewish/Christian meaning. For John, the Logos is intensely personal & radically different from Greek philosophy. The Logos as person, not principle.⁶

As Greek & Hebrew cultures overlapped, these concepts of 'word' interacted. In this setting John describes Jesus as *Logos*. He didn't copy their concepts. He poured new meaning into the concept of *Logos*. In relation to God, Jesus as *Logos* wasn't merely an angel or created being as agent of creation, nor just *another* word from God, He was God Himself. In relation to humanity, Jesus the *Logos* wasn't the impersonal principle of Stoicism, but a personal Savior who took on human flesh. Logos becoming flesh & living among us was in sharp contrast to Greek ideas. By depicting Jesus as *Logos*, John portrays Him as the preexistent Creator of the universe, with & identical to God. From this perspective of Jesus' divinity & eternity, any view of Jesus as a mere prophet, or teacher would be impossible (Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:13–20; 2:9–10; Heb. 1:1–4; 1 John 1:1–3; Rev. 19:13).⁷ It's this concept, coupled with grace, which sets Christianity apart from all religions.

In other NT texts, *logos* refers to Scripture, especially in preaching the gospel (Luke 5:1; 8:11–15; Acts 4:31; 8:14; 12:24; Rom. 10:8; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:23–25; Heb. 4:12). The preaching of the gospel brings order & meaning to lives shattered by sin. Those who put faith in Jesus will be welcomed into the family of God (John 1:11–12).⁸ So, when we preach the Gospel, we don't just throw out words, we preach Jesus who brings order & meaning to life.

⁴ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁵ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

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⁸ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

As John says, Jesus is the light which shines in the darkness & the darkness can never extinguish it. The Word become human dwelling among us. In Jesus God's revealed.

John's saying, Jesus is the Logos which created the heavens & earth. The transcendent power behind the universe. The ultimate reality of all things.⁹ Alpha & Omega, the first & last letter of the greek alphabet, which hems in all things - the first & final word. Uncreated, which John the Baptist realized when he said, '*Someone's coming after me who's far greater than I am, for he existed long before me*'. John was 3 months older than Jesus, but grasped the eternal uncreated nature of Christ. In Jesus, God's personal & knowable. In Jesus, we meet God.

John states the Logos isn't only with God, but is God. There may be some difficulty in saying the Word's both *with* & *in* God, or both distinguished from & identified with God. Christ's the same as God the Father, yet we're able to distinguish Him from the Father; one in being, two in person. Father & Son one being, distinguished in terms of personality, work & ministry they perform'.¹⁰

In the first chapter of John the idea of the Logos being *with* God's significant. Greek language had three different words for the English word *with*. The first is *sun*, rendered into English as the prefix *syn*. Found in words such as *synchronize*, *syncretism* & *synagogue*. Synagogue being a place where people come together *with* others. To be 'with' in the sense of 'sun' is to be present in a group, to be gathered with other people.

The second word is '*meta*', meaning 'to be alongside of', or 'side by side'. If I were to walk side by side with Kim down the street, I'd be meta Kim.

And a third word for *with* was '*pros*'. Found less frequently, but it's part of another Greek word, *prosepon*, which means *face*. This kind of 'with-ness' is the most intimate of all types. John's saying, the Logos existed with God, *pros* God - face to face in relationship of eternal intimacy. It's this kind of relationship Jews yearned to have with God. The Logos enjoys this kind of intimate face-to-face relationship from all eternity with the Father. The Father & Son are one in relationship & being.

In the beginning of John's gospel, the concept of the Logos comes to climax as we read, ¹⁴*The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth.* Dwelling literally means to 'pitch his tent among us'. In the Old Testament, God dwelt with his people by means of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, where Israel would go to meet with God. The New Testament tabernacle is the incarnate Word, the Logos, who embodies the truth of God himself. The mind of God made flesh, coming to dwell with

⁹ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

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us in flesh & blood.¹¹ We go to Jesus to meet God. He's the Tent of Meeting, the manifestation of God's glory.

Getting away from terminology, let's think about this. People have similar physical characteristics. If you were to see a man from 500 yards away, you might say, "That's Mike Thomas." But you wouldn't be sure. From a distance people may look the same, but as they come closer you recognize features, gate, hair color & physical attributes clearly. When they speak you know who the person is, because they're who they are by how they look & speak - their thoughts & ideas.

If you look at the worlds religions & pop-spirituality the same way, from afar they share characteristics. Some moral message, a God concept, religious texts, prophets & teachers, etc. From a distance they look similar, if not the same. However, as you get closer by reading the texts & actually listen to their prophets & teachers, you find a vastly different view of God expressed, especially in how you reach Him. God doesn't have multiple personalities, He communicates Himself in one way, just as I only communicate myself in one way. I can't take on various personalities, it'd be impossible, or I'd be crazy. Likewise it's impossible for God to do so.

Christianity says Jesus is God, others deny this. As a person I have a set of beliefs, a world view & system of thought - that's my word communicated in one consistent way revealing who I am. John proclaimed Jesus as God. Jesus said the same about Himself. But in Islam, for instance, Jesus is only prophet, no where near 'God' & the tactic of Islam is to discount Scriptures words about Jesus by claiming they've been changed - change the words, change the person. Any experience we have of God must be grounded in right thinking about who God is as found in the Bible - the steering wheel in the car, without it you can't control the vehicle. With it, you navigate life easily.

If I instructed you how to prepare pufferfish by saying just filet & grill it, you'd die. Pufferfish has a poisonous gland within the meat. There's one way to prepare it. Only certain chefs are licensed to do so. They remove the toxin the same way. People may end up at a restaurant by different routes to eat pufferfish, but they all end up at the same restaurant with the one chef who's able to prepare it. Once they open the door they all see & experience the same thing & all eat pufferfish the same way, or they'd die.

What John's saying is, Jesus is the way God's revealed himself to us. We may have different life's journeys, no story's the same. Jews came through the journey of Judaism understanding the concept of Logos in their way, but they walked through the door of the restaurant, confronted with Jesus. Greeks came from another avenue understanding the Logos from their philosophy, but they walked through the door & met Jesus the same way. Jesus removes the toxin of sin & we're nourished by Him.

¹¹ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Reconciliation with God's only revealed in the person of Jesus Christ embodying the Christian Scriptures. You may begin life as a Muslim, but you have to end up back at the restaurant of the Living Word & leave Islam behind to find God.

We come to Jesus, the living Word to find light & life; as He said, we must be reborn. We can't find God through any other religion when those religions say very different things about who God is - Word & Thought are important. John's saying Jesus is the one & only God. Those who reject Jesus, reject God. Those who find Him, find light & life. Hebrews 1:1-4 says, *"Long ago, at many times & in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."*

God spoke many times & in many ways, but it's always been the same message, since it's the same God speaking - He doesn't have multiple personalities. God's not embodied in any other religious or spiritual teaching, they're not His Words. God chose a people, Israel, led & prepared them throughout history - always pointing to the coming Messiah which culminates in one person, the Living Word, the one true God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. *As Hebrews 1:3-4 ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God & the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."*

Jesus came to proclaim Himself as Light & Life, when He preached repentance, (Mark 1:15) people thought Him strange. When He healed & performed miracles, they thought Him a prophet sent by God (John 3:2). Speaking with power, they thought He was amazing (Luke 4:36). However, when He claimed equality with God, they thought Him crazy (John 19:7). He became a stumbling block when He made that claim (John 14:9).

Who or what is Jesus to you? A good teacher, a moralist, a nice guy, on par with Ghandi or Muhammed? Just a prophet? Or, is He what John & others, including himself, claimed Him to be, the Living Word of God? The one true God, the creator God, light & life to humankind. The only one who can bring rebirth & reconciliation with God to us! There's a right answer, don't be afraid to be sure of who Jesus is. Because heaven's like Juno, Alaska - there's only one way in, by plane. And the only way to the Father is through the living Word, Jesus.