

## John 1:1-5

### I. Prologue (1:1-18)

#### A. The Word (1:1-5)

### **John's Genealogy**

The Gospel of Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy, tracing his lineage from Abraham through Joseph (1:1-17). Luke likewise gives a genealogy, looking at Mary's ancestry all the way back to *Adam, the son of God* (3:38, cf. vv. 23-38). While Matthew and Luke usually receive the bulk of the attention when it comes to Jesus' genealogies, John should be right in their midst. Instead of considering His human ancestry, John looks at it from a different angle. In John 1:1-2, we read:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

John bypasses all the humans to look at Jesus' divine nature, which makes sense given John's emphasis on Jesus' divinity. It ties into his purpose for writing: *these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God* (20:31). Part of the Gospel message that one must believe to have eternal life is that Jesus is the sinless Son of God! No other view of Jesus is sufficient!

In the beginning was the Son of God, here referred to as *the Word* (cf. 1:14; 1 John 1:1; Rev 19:13). During His incarnation, Jesus is the One who communicated God's truth (Heb 1:2). Even in the Old Testament, the Son of God appeared as the Angel of the LORD, communicating God's truth and revealing God's plan to His people. He is also, as F. F. Bruce notes, God's "word in action."<sup>1</sup> When God's Word gets involved, His plan for the world is accomplished! *It shall not return to Me void* (Isa 55:11)!

To that end, the very phrase *in the beginning* recalls to our minds the opening sentence of Genesis: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*. In Genesis 1, what do we read repeatedly but *then God said* (vv. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)? This Word was in the beginning and, as we'll see in a moment, He was in the beginning creating the world. And the Word did so as God. The Word, the Son of God, has eternally existed as a Person of the Triune Godhead.<sup>2</sup> Going back to Hebrews, the Word is *the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person* (1:3).

Backing up that claim, John writes that *all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made* (1:3). The Son of God was there at creation, and *all things were made through Him*.<sup>3</sup> Paul makes note of this in Colossians 1:16-17, as well.

*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

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<sup>1</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 29. He then goes on to give Old Testament examples, such as Ps 107:20 and Isa 55:11.

<sup>2</sup>Jehovah's Witnesses are heretically wrong when they translate the end of v. 1 as *the word was a god* (<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20081101/was-the-word-god/>). The Greek is quite clear. Far from saying Jesus was a god, the Greek emphasizes that Jesus is fully God!

<sup>3</sup>Once again, this shows the folly of the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses (<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/wp20130301/when-jesus-created-why-son/>). If *without Him nothing was made that was made*, how could the Word Himself be made?

The Word created all things and holds all things together! He is the One that brought about physical life on this planet, and now He's come to this planet to make provisions for spiritual life! We have the privilege of knowing how the Gospel of John ends, and why John wrote. Knowing this, we see from the opening verses that John already has his sights set on the Gospel. Jesus is who He says He is: the Son of God.

Our passage today ends in vv. 4-5:

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*Life* is a favorite word of John's, occurring thirty-six times throughout his Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Seventeen of those occurrences are found in the phrase *eternal life*, and it's clear that many of those other uses have the same sense. Think of the well-known 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth, and the life!*

This *light shines in the darkness*.<sup>5</sup> The last phrase of v. 5, however, is probably better translated as *overcome* the way we read in the NIV and ESV. We see a parallel passage in John 12:35.

*Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.*

In these verses it seems like John and Jesus are talking about two different systems – two kingdoms – if you will.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, we already have a foreshadowing of Jesus' victory over the world in 1:5. The darkness wasn't able to defeat the Light. The darkness wasn't able to swallow up the Light. He has overcome the world (16:33; cf. Rev 5:5)! We could then turn to Paul for a result of the Light's victory:

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. (Eph 5:8)*

John starts right out of the gate, setting the stage and making his argument for believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. As Jesus is the Word of God, as He accomplishes the Father's purpose, may we remain steadfast in Him.

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<sup>4</sup>The Greek word for *life* occurs a total of 135x in the New Testament.

<sup>5</sup>*Light* is another common word in John, occurring twenty-three times, nearly a third of the uses in the New Testament.

<sup>6</sup>This understanding comes in handy when we turn to 1 John.