

# John 1:2 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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## JESUS' RISE FROM OBSCURITY FOLLOWED BY OPPOSITION IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY GOSPEL OF JOHN (shaded area)

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John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God: houtos en (3SIAI) en arche pros ton Theon. [NASB: Lockman](#)

- In the beginning - Ge 1:1, Jn 1:1, Heb 1:10

### ETERNAL UNION AFFIRMED

There is no new information in this verse which was not taught in John 1:1-note. As **Bob Utley** says "This is parallel to Jn 1:1 and emphasizes again the shocking truth in light of [monotheism](#) that Jesus, who was born around 6–5BC., has always been with the Father and, therefore, is deity." ([John 1 Commentary](#))

**He (this one) (houtos)** - Masculine singular. Refers to the **Word**, the **Messiah**. John reiterates that He is **eternal** and that He is in close relationship with the Father. As [Leon Morris](#) says "These Two are not the same, but they belong together. The fact that One may be said to be **"with"** the Other clearly differentiates Them. Yet though They are distinct, there is no disharmony. John's expression points us to the perfect unity in which they are joined." (See related topic - [How is the doctrine of the Trinity not tritheism?](#))

**A T Robertson** on **houtos** - "This one," the Logos of John 1:1-note, repeated for clarity, characteristic of John's style. He links together into one phrase two of the ideas already stated separately, "in the beginning He was with God," "afterwards in time He came to be with man" (Marcus Dods). Thus John clearly states of the Logos Pre-existence before Incarnation, Personality, Deity. ([John 1 Word Pictures in the NT](#))

**Horner** - "This [Word] was existing in the beginning before [in intimate union with] God." In typical Johannine fashion, the main thought of Jn 1:1-note is repeated and refined (**Ed: John uses the tool of repetition frequently in his writing** - e.g., even in the prologue compare - Jn 1:1, 2, 18 = Jesus in intimate fellowship with the Father; Jn 1:1, 18 = Jesus sharing God the Father's essence; Jn 1:9,14 - deity becoming Man; Jn 1:12,13 = God the Father's means of redemption and adoption). Jesus Christ did not come to be with God, as if at a point of origination; rather Jesus Christ *is being* with God in the beginning. There was never a time when Jesus Christ did not exist with the Father. ([John 1:1-18 The Prologue Ministry of Jesus Christ](#))

**Albert Barnes** on Jn 1:2 - This seems to be a repetition of what was said in the first verse; but it is stated over again to **guard the doctrine,**" (cf 1Ti 6:20, 2Ti 1:14-note) and to prevent the possibility of a mistake. John had said that He existed before the creation, and that He was **"with God;"** but he had not said in the first verse **"that the union with God existed in the beginning."** He now expresses that idea, and assures us that that union was not one which was commenced in time, and which might be, therefore, a mere union of feeling, or a compact, like that between any other beings, but was one which existed in eternity, and which was therefore a union of nature or essence. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

**John Calvin** - . In order to impress more deeply on our minds what had been already said, the Evangelist condenses the two preceding clauses into a brief summary, that the Speech always was, and that he was with God; so that it may be understood that

the beginning was before all time. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

**H A Ironside** - The next sentence might seem to be almost a repetition: "The same was in the beginning with God." But it really adds to what has already been put before us. It tells us of His unchanging personality. He was the same from all eternity; that is, He was the Eternal Son. He did not become the Son when He was born into the world, but "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour" (1John 4:14). He did not become the Son after He was sent, He was the Son from the beginning. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

**F F Bruce** however sees Jn 1:2 as more than a repetition of John 1:1 - This might appear to be little more than a repetition of the second clause of Jn 1:1, but it is more than that. This divine Word of whom I speak, the Evangelist implies, is the one who, according to the earlier Scriptures, was with God in the beginning; he is probably referring to passages where divine wisdom is personified and described as being present and active at the creation of the world. Thus, in Pr 8:22-31 Wisdom claims to have been the Creator's master workman. The Evangelist makes it plain that the Word of which he speaks is also the Wisdom

**David J McLeod** has some interesting comments on Jn 1:2 - Most commentators assume that verse 2 ("He was in the beginning with God") merely repeats verse 1 (For example Godet, The Gospel of John, 1:248; Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 1:7; Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, 1:3; Beasley-Murray, John, 11; Carson, The Gospel according to John; and Morris, The Gospel according to John, 70), stressing that the Word is eternal. However, it is likely that John meant more than that.<sup>67</sup> In this verse John answered a question prompted by certain mysterious elements of the Old Testament revelation. The Old Testament personified divine wisdom, that is, it sometimes spoke of wisdom as if it were a person. For example in Proverbs 8:22-31 wisdom speaks as the master craftsman through whom God created the earth. "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth ... then I was beside Him" (vv. 22, 30). The λόγος of which John wrote is the wisdom described in Old Testament times. Λόγος and wisdom alike became incarnate in Jesus Christ. John 1:2 also answers the Creator's rhetorical question in Isaiah 44:24: "I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth—Who was with me?" (RSV). John answered, in essence, "He—the λόγος, Christ—was with God the Father!" The Greek text uses a pronoun to emphasize the point: "This one (houtos) i.e., the λόγος, was with God." When God said in Genesis 1:26, "Let **Us** make man," to whom was He speaking? John answered, "This One, i.e., the λόγος, who was in the beginning with God!" And then there is Agur's question about the transcendence of God: "Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name?" (Pr 30:4). Interpreters have puzzled over the identity of this figure.<sup>71</sup> In Agur's words "the NT doctrine of the Son of God [was] announcing itself from afar." This one, the λόγος, according to John, is the Son of whom Agur spoke. ([The Eternality and Deity of the Word- John 1:1-2](#))

**Marcus Dods** says that Jn 1:2 is "Not a mere repetition of what has been said in John 1:1. There John has said that the Word was in the beginning and also that He was with God: here he indicates that these two characteristics existed contemporaneously. "He was in the beginning with God." He wishes also to emphasize this in view of what he is about to tell. In the beginning He was with God, afterwards, in time, He came to be with man. His pristine condition must first be grasped, if the grace of what succeeds is to be understood." ([John 1 Commentary](#))

**A W Pink** on **He** ("the same" or "this one") **was in the beginning with God** - The "same," that is, the Word; "**was**," that is, subsisted, not began to be; "**in the beginning**," that is, before time commenced; "**with God**," that is, as a distinct Personality. That it is here repeated Christ was "**with God**," seems to be intended as a repudiation of the early Gnostic heresy that Christ was only an idea or ideal IN the mind of God from eternity, duly made manifest in time—a horrible heresy which is being reechoed in our own day. **It is not said that the Word was IN God**; He was, eternally, "**WITH God**." ([John 1:1-13 Christ the Eternal Word](#))

**Marvin Vincent** - In John 1:1 the elements of this statement have been given separately: the Word, the eternal being of the Word, and his active communion with God. Here they are combined, and with new force. This same Word not only was coeternal with God in respect of being (was), but was eternally in active communion with Him (in the beginning with God: pros ton theon): "not simply the Word with God, but God with God" (Moulton). Notice that here theon has the article, as in the second proposition, where God is spoken of absolutely. In the third proposition, the Word was God, the article was omitted because theos described the nature of the Word and did not identify his person. Here, as in the second proposition, the Word is placed in personal relation to God. This verse (Jn 1:2) forms the transition point from the discussion of the personal being of the Word to His manifestation in creation. If it was this same Word, and no other, Who was Himself God, and Who, from all eternity, was in active communion with God, then the statement follows naturally that all things were created through Him, thus bringing the essential nature of the Word and His manifestation in creation into connection. As the idea of the Word involves knowledge and will, wisdom and force, the creative function is properly His. Hence His close relation to created things, especially to man, prepares the way for His incarnation and redeeming work. **The connection between creation and redemption is closer than is commonly apprehended.** It is intimated in the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 46:4), "I have made, and I will bear." Redemption, in a certain sense, grows out of creation. Because God created man in His own image, He would restore him to that image. Because God made man, He loves him, educates him, bears with him carries on the race on the line of His infinite patience, is burdened with its perverseness and blindness, and expresses and effectuates all this

in the incarnation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. God is under the stress of the parental instinct (humanly speaking) to redeem man. ([John 1 Commentary - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**Gerald Borchert** agrees with **Barnes** writing that "The verse opens with the typical Johannine use of "this one" (houtos, the word in the Gospel that indicates a specific designation), and it pinpoints the focus of the affirmations of Jn 1:1, namely, that from the very beginning the Logos was directly related to God. This affirmation becomes in the Fourth Gospel the crucial issue in the confrontation with the Jews (e.g., he made himself equal with God; cf. John 5:18; 19:7). ([John 1-11- An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture - The New American Commentary](#))

**Hendriksen** on Jn 1:2 - This fully divine Word, existing from all eternity as a distinct Person, was enjoying loving fellowship with the Father. Thus, the full deity of Christ, His eternity, and His distinct personal existence are confessed once more, in order that heretics may be refuted and the Church may be established in the faith and love of God. ([New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel According to John](#))

**D A Carson** on Jn 1:2 - In one sense this verse is simply a repetition of the first two clauses of Jn 1:1. But John includes these words to make sure what he has already said is understood. After all, Jn 1:1 is very condensed. Now John works backward, saying in effect: 'This Word Who is God, is the very One of whom I have also said that he was in the beginning, and that He was with (pros) God.' In particular, Jn 1:2 reiterates the middle clause of Jn 1:1, and thus prepares the way for Jn 1:3. ([The Gospel according to John -The Pillar New Testament Commentary](#))

**John Gill** - This is a repetition of what is before said, and is made to show the importance of the truths before delivered; namely, the eternity of Christ, his distinct personality, and proper deity; and that the phrase, in the beginning, is to be joined to each of the above sentences; and so proves, not only his eternal existence, but his eternal existence with the Father, and also his eternal deity; and is also made to carry on the thread of the discourse, concerning the word, and not God the Father; and to express, not only his co-existence in nature, but his co-operation in the works of creation next mentioned. ([John 1 Commentary](#))

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VERB "WAS"

**Was** (1510) ([en](#) which is the imperfect form of [eimi](#)) means to be and is the usual verb for existence. In the metaphysical sense as in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word," meaning it had been before there was any beginning or existed before the beginning of anything; John 8:50, *estín*, in the pres. tense indicating." ([Zodhiates](#)) Notice John does not say in the beginning CAME the Word or BEGAN the Word, but WAS the Word. This verb is in the **imperfect tense** which speak of continuous action. In a word, the Word was continually existing!

John is a master at using the Greek verbs and tenses and four times in Jn 1:1-2 he uses the **imperfect tense** ([en](#)) of the verb [eimi](#) to say the Word **was** God (all of John's statements regarding His pre-existence are in this tense), but in Jn 1:14-note he uses the verb [ginomai](#) in the **aorist tense** ([punctiliar](#), an instantaneous intervention, decisive, at a moment or point in time - the aorist usage here refers to some historical time in the past as the beginning of the new state) He became Man. So Jesus who always **was** God, **became** Man in a moment in time, doing so without ceasing to be God! Amazing truth! John never says Christ**became** God but only that He **was** (always) God!

It is notable that the verb [en](#) (**imperfect** of [eimi](#)) is used by John in every instance where he is referring to the **eternal** state of Jesus (see Jn 1:1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15). One exception might be John's use of [ginomai](#) in an allusion to Jesus' existence before [implying His eternal state] John (the Baptist) (Jn 1:15-note) As discussed above John uses [ginomai](#) in the **aorist tense** ([egeneto](#)) to refer to becoming something that one was not before in John 1:14-note where God became a Man. In addition to John 1:14, other uses of [ginomai](#) in the **aorist tense** ([egeneto](#)) in John's prologue are found in John 1:3-note (twice in the phrase "**came** into being"), John 1:6 ("There **came** a man, sent from God"), John 1:10-note ("the world was **made** through Him") and John 1:17-note ("grace and truth **were realized** [came] through Jesus Christ."). Note that [ginomai](#) is also used in the **perfect tense** in John 1:3 ("**has come into being**") and John 1:15-note ("He **existed** before me"), where the **perfect tense** implies a continuing existence of a new state.

**Beginning** (746)([arche](#)) refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being. *Arché* refers to first in relation to time (priority in time, the beginning of anything, the origin and by far the most common use in the NT. In context *arche* "means that He (the Word) was before all else." ([Leon Morris](#)) *Arche* can also convey the meaning of origin, such as "origin in the sense of basic cause." (Morris) **William Barclay** translates it in the beginning "**the Word** was already there."

**With God** - The "Word of God" (Jesus Christ) was God yet also **with God**." Thus, God is both personal and plural (in a uni-plural sense only, a mysterious category that makes sense only in terms of the doctrine of the [Trinity](#)).

The actual Greek is *en arche*--that is, "in beginning." The "Word of God" thus was there before the creation of the space/mass/time universe, so that John's "**beginning**" even antecedes the Genesis "**beginning**," (Ge 1:1) extending without an initial beginning into eternity past, before even time was created. Note also Jn 17:24, where Jesus, in His humanity, acknowledged that He was with the

Father and loved by the Father, "before the foundation of the world."

**With** ([4314](#))(**pros**) is a preposition which properly speaks of motion towards to "interface with" (literally, moving toward a goal or destination). In Jn 1:1 **pros** indicates place or accompaniment, but also disposition and orientation.

**Vincent** notes that "The preposition **pros**, with the accusative case (as in Eph 3:14), denotes motion towards, or direction and is also often used in the New Testament in the sense of with; and that not merely as being near or beside, but as a living union and communion; implying the active notion of intercourse.

**Hendriksen** on **pros** - The New Testament contains more than 600 examples of pros with the accusative. It indicates motion or direction toward a place, or as here, close proximity; hence, friendship, intimacy, in this context. The meaning is that the Word existed in the closest possible fellowship with the Father, and that he took supreme delight in this communion. So deeply had this former joy impressed itself upon the Logos that it was never erased from his consciousness, as is also evident from the high-priestly prayer: "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self or: in thine own presence, with the glory which I had with thee before the world existed." (Jn 17:5) Thus, the incarnation begins to stand out more clearly as a **deed of incomprehensible love and infinite condescension**. ([Ibid](#))

**BDAG** - prep. expressing direction 'on the side of', 'in the direction of': w. gen. 'from', dat. 'at', or acc. (the most freq. usage in our lit.) 'to'

**Swanson** - pros: preposition —1. to, extension toward a goal (Mt 10:6; Lk 23:7); 2. against, extension that will have contact and reaction (Mt 4:6; Ac 26:14); 3. at, by alongside a location (Mk 1:33; Jn 18:16; Ac 5:10); 4. among, with; in a location (Mt 13:56); 5. to, with; a marker of an experiencer of an event (Ac 3:25; Gal 6:10); 6. about, a marker of content (Mt 27:14; Mk 12:12; Col 3:13); 7. with, a marker of association and interrelationships (Jn 1:1; Ro 5:1); 8. for, a marker of purpose (Ac 3:10; Ro 3:26); 9. according to, a marker of correspondence, implying reciprocity (Lk 12:47; Gal 2:14); 10. toward, a marker of a period of time (Lk 24:29); 11. at the time (Heb 12:11); 12. to the point of (Jas 4:5); 13. with regard to, between (Mt 27:4; 2Co 6:14)

**Friberg** - preposition;

I. with the genitive to show advantage necessary for, beneficial toward (Acts 27.34);

II. with the dative to show a near position at, by, close to, before (Mk 5.11; Lk 19.37);

III. **predominately with the accusative;**

(1) literally, to show motion toward a person or thing to, toward; after verbs of going (Mk 1.33), sending (Acts 25.21), leading (Lk 19.35); figuratively, after verbs of attracting or drawing (Jn 12.32);

(2) literally, to show movement toward an object and implied reaction from it against (Mt 4.6; Acts 26.14);

(3) figuratively, to show close relationship to a person;

(a) in a friendly, peaceful manner with, before, toward (Ro 5.1; Col 4.5);

(b) in an unfriendly, hostile manner against, toward (Acts 24.19);

(c) to show interrelationship among, with (Mt 13.56);

(4) to show time;

(a) of approaching a point in time to, toward (Lk 24.29);

(b) of marking a given (and probably approximate) span of time at, about (Heb 12.11); idiomatically pros kairon = literally about a season, i.e. for a while, for a time (Lk 8.13); pros kairos horas = literally about a season of an hour, i.e. for a little while, for a short time (1Thes 2.17); pros horan = literally about an hour, i.e. for a short time, briefly (Jn 5.35); pros kairon hemeras = literally about a few days, i.e. for a little while, for a short time (Heb 12.10);

(5) to show purpose;

(a) to introduce the purpose or goal of an action for the purpose of, for the sake of, in order to (Jn 11.4; Acts 3.10);

(b) to introduce a near purpose in relation to an ultimate goal for the purpose of, with a view to (Eph 4.12; 1Pe 4.12);

(6) to show result, looking toward the end point of a set of circumstances up to the point of, ending up in, so as to result in (Mt 5.28;

Jn 4.35);

(7) to show a close connection of content;

(a) when people are involved with reference to, about (Mk 12.12);

(b) when things are involved with regard to, as concerns (perhaps Mt 27.14; Heb 6.11);

(c) when agreement or harmony is involved in line with, corresponding to (Lk 12.47; Gal 2.14); IV. absolutely, as an adverb besides, over and above (probably Mt 27.14)

**Gilbrant on pros** - In the New Testament **pros** is used only once with the genitive (Acts 27:34) and 6 times with the dative (Mark 5:11; John 18:16; 20:11,12; Revelation 1:13; Luke 19:37) compared with nearly 700 times in the accusative. When used with the **genitive** case **pros** indicates the advantage of something: "Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health" (Acts 27:34; cf. Bauer). When used with the **dative** **pros** may indicate either a location, being translated "near, at, by," or "around"; or it may indicate an addition, being translated "in addition to" (Bauer). Only the former, indicating location, is used in the New Testament. An example can be seen at John 20:12: "... and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet" (cf. Revelation 1:13; John 18:16; 20:11). With the **accusative** **pros** may indicate movement "toward" a place. In this sense **pros** may be used with the accusative of the place, person, or thing (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 1:9: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you"). It may be used with verbs of sending (e.g., Luke 23:7, "he sent him to Herod"); of motion generally (e.g., Luke 16:20, "... Lazarus, which was laid at his gate"); of leading or guiding (e.g., John 12:32, "... if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"); of saying or speaking (e.g., Acts 12:21, "Herod ... made an oration unto them"); and of asking or praying (e.g., Acts 8:24, "Simon ... said, Pray ye to the Lord for me"). Other major uses of **pros** with the accusative include its use of time (e.g., denoting approaching time, Luke 24:29: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening"; denoting the duration of a period, 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time"). Another use is to help express a goal (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:35: "And this I speak for your own profit"). It may be used to help express hostile or friendly relations (e.g., in a hostile sense, Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood"; and in a friendly sense, Galatians 6:10: "Let us do good unto all men"). In addition, it may be used to indicate a connection. In this sense it may be translated "with reference to" (e.g., Matthew 19:8: "Moses because of [i.e., with reference to] the hardness of your hearts ... "; in comparison with [Romans 8:18]); and it may be translated "as far as" or "as" (e.g., Acts 28:10: "They laded us with such things as were necessary"). **Pros** may also be used in adverbial expressions although there are no definite occurrences of this function in the New Testament.

**Pros** - 700x in 647v -

Matt 2:12; 3:5, 10, 13ff; 4:6; 5:28; 6:1; 7:15; 10:6, 13; 11:28; 13:2, 30, 56; 14:25, 28f; 17:14; 19:8, 14; 21:32, 34, 37; 23:5, 34, 37; 25:9, 36, 39; 26:12, 14, 18, 40, 45, 57; 27:4, 14, 19, 62; Mark 1:5, 27, 32f, 40, 45; 2:2f, 13; 3:7f, 13, 31; 4:1, 41; 5:11, 15, 19, 22; 6:3, 25, 30, 45, 48, 51; 7:1, 25; 8:16; 9:10, 14, 16f, 19f, 34; 10:1, 5, 7, 14, 26, 50; 11:1, 4, 7, 27, 31; 12:2, 4, 6f, 12f, 18; 13:22; 14:4, 10, 49, 53f; 15:31, 43; 16:3; Luke 1:13, 18f, 27f, 34, 43, 55, 61, 73, 80; 2:15, 18, 20, 34, 48f; 3:9, 12f; 4:4, 11, 21, 23, 26, 36, 40, 43; 5:4, 10, 22, 30f, 33f, 36; 6:3, 9, 11, 47; 7:3f, 7, 19f, 24, 40, 44, 50; 8:4, 13, 19, 21f, 25, 35; 9:3, 13f, 23, 33, 41, 43, 50, 57, 59, 62; 10:2, 23, 26, 29, 39; 11:1, 5f, 39; 12:1, 3, 15f, 22, 41, 47, 58; 13:7, 23, 34; 14:3, 5ff, 23, 25f, 32; 15:3, 18, 20, 22; 16:1, 20, 26, 30; 17:1, 4, 22; 18:1, 3, 9, 11, 16, 31, 40; 19:5, 8f, 13, 29, 33, 35, 37, 39, 42; 20:2f, 5, 9f, 14, 19, 23, 25, 41; 21:38; 22:15, 23, 45, 52, 56, 70; 23:4, 7, 12, 14f, 22, 28; 24:5, 10, 12, 14, 17f, 25, 29, 32, 44, 50; John 1:1f, 19, 29, 42, 47; 2:3; 3:2, 4, 20f, 26; 4:15, 30, 33, 35, 40, 47ff; 5:33, 35, 40, 45; 6:5, 17, 28, 34f, 37, 44f, 52, 65, 68; 7:3, 33, 35, 37, 45, 50; 8:2, 31, 33, 57; 9:13; 10:35, 41; 11:3f, 15, 19, 21, 29, 32, 45f; 12:19, 32; 13:1, 3, 6, 28; 14:3, 6, 12, 18, 23, 28; 16:5, 7, 10, 17, 28; 17:11, 13; 18:13, 16, 24, 29, 38; 19:3, 24, 39; 20:2, 10ff, 17; 21:22f; Acts 1:7; 2:12, 29, 37f, 47; 3:2, 10ff, 22, 25; 4:1, 8, 15, 19, 23f, 37; 5:8ff, 35; 6:1; 7:3; 8:14, 20, 24, 26; 9:2, 10f, 15, 27, 29, 32, 38, 40; 10:3, 13, 15, 21, 28, 33; 11:2f, 11, 14, 20, 30; 12:5, 8, 15, 20f; 13:15, 31f, 36; 14:11; 15:2, 7, 25, 33, 36; 16:36f, 40; 17:2, 15, 17; 18:6, 14, 21; 19:2, 31, 38; 20:6, 18; 21:11, 18, 37, 39; 22:1, 5, 8, 10, 13, 15, 21, 25; 23:3, 17f, 22, 24, 30; 24:12, 16, 19; 25:16, 19, 21f; 26:1, 9, 14, 26, 28, 31; 27:3, 12, 34; 28:4, 8, 10, 17, 21, 23, 25f, 30; Rom 1:10, 13; 3:26; 4:2; 5:1; 8:18, 31; 10:1, 21; 15:2, 17, 22f, 29f, 32; 1 Cor 2:1, 3; 4:18f, 21; 6:1, 5; 7:5, 35; 10:11; 12:2, 7; 13:12; 14:6, 12, 26; 15:34; 16:5ff, 10ff; 2 Cor 1:12, 15f, 18, 20; 2:1, 16; 3:1, 4, 13, 16; 4:2, 6; 5:8, 10, 12; 6:11, 14f; 7:3f, 8, 12; 8:17, 19; 10:4; 11:8f; 12:14, 17, 21; 13:1, 7; Gal 1:17f; 2:5, 14; 4:18, 20; 6:10; Eph 2:18; 3:4, 14; 4:12, 14, 29; 5:31; 6:9, 11f, 22; Phil 1:26; 2:25, 30; 4:6; Col 2:23; 3:13, 19; 4:5, 8, 10; 1 Thess 1:8f; 2:1f, 9, 17f; 3:4, 6, 11; 4:12; 5:14; 2 Thess 2:5; 3:1, 8, 10; 1 Tim 1:16; 3:14; 4:7f; 2 Tim 2:24; 3:16f; 4:9; Titus 1:16; 3:1f, 12; Philemon 1:5, 13, 15; Heb 1:7f, 13; 2:17; 4:13; 5:1, 5, 7, 14; 6:11; 7:21; 9:13, 20; 10:16; 11:18; 12:4, 10f; 13:13; Jas 4:5, 14; 1 Pet 2:4; 3:15; 4:12; 2 Pet 1:3; 3:16; 1 John 1:2; 2:1; 3:21; 5:14, 16f; 2 John 1:10, 12; 3 John 1:14; Rev 1:13, 17; 3:20; 10:9; 12:5, 12; 13:6

**The (3588)(ho, hē, to)** is the article "**the**" and "imparts a component of individuality in any form of expression." As alluded to below



this is a simple discussion of this article which is best studied in Greek grammar and since I am not a Greek expert, this is a very simple discussion. Note also that in Greek there is no **indefinite** article as there is in English (where "a" is the indefinite article - "a glass", not "the glass" - latter is definite).

**See Related Resources:**

[Learning New Testament Greek- Nouns, Articles, and Position](#)

[Greek Definite Article \(Modern & Ancient\)](#)

[New Testament Greek - The Definite Article](#)

**BDAG** - Since the treatment of the inclusion and omission of the article belongs to the field of grammar, the lexicon can limit itself to exhibiting the main features of its usage. It is difficult to set hard and fast rules for the employment of the art., since the writer's style had special freedom of play here

**Swanson** writes that "of the almost 20,000 occurrences in the NT, about half are not translated in the NIV. When it is translated, it mostly represents the English word **"the"**. It variously limits nouns and noun-like ideas, often with a pronominal (pertaining to or resembling a pronoun) use (Mt 2:9a, 14a; 4:4a; 9:31a), or can simply be used as a structural case marker (Mt 1:2a, b). It can be used with prepositions, adverbs, and infinitives, and other particles; there are many refinements to these ideas. **Begin by consulting grammars; one is not competent to pontificate on the Greek article without careful analysis.**"

**Gilbrant** writes that "The origin of the article **ho, hē, to** (the masculine, feminine, and neuter forms), meaning "the," is from the Greek word *hōde* (3455), *hēde*, *tōde* meaning "this, these," or "that, those." Over time it became weakened to mean simply "the" (Vaughan and Gideon, *Greek Grammar*, p.80). But the article is sometimes restored to its original force and origin and may be translated by various pronouns such as "this, that, some, others, ours, his," or "which." In English we have two words known as "articles": the indefinite article "a" (or "an"), and the definite article "the." In Greek however, there is only the definite article **ho, hē, to**. Omitting the article before a word often gives that word an indefiniteness. Unfortunately, an English translation does not show the significance of the use or omission of the Greek article. It has many usages and possible meanings not translated. **The general rule for understanding the article is as follows:** (1) the article placed before a word makes that word either definite (stressing its identity) or generic (the word is a general representative of a class or group); and (2) the omission of the article before a word makes that word indefinite ("a," "an") or qualitative (stressing its essence, character, and quality). For example, the omission of the article before "God" in "... and the Word was God" (John 1:1), gives the word "God" a qualitative meaning. That is, the Word is the essence of the divine nature of God. Thus, the Word, *logos* (3030), is "very God," not the indefinite "a god." Frequently the article is used before a word to point it out in a distinctive way, distinguishing and contrasting one thing from another. In Acts 19:13, "We adjure you by (the) Jesus whom Paul preaches," uses the article before "Jesus" to point out His distinctiveness and identity. ([The Complete Biblical Library](#))

**MacLeod** summarizes Genesis 1:1-2 - John 1:1-2 focuses in several ways on the person and work of Christ as central to the Christian worldview. |

**First**, these verses proclaim **"the finality of Jesus Christ"** He alone is God come to earth. No other can stand alongside Him or take His place.

**Second**, these verses proclaim **"the mystery of Jesus Christ"** Since He is one with God in His being, He shares in the infinity and limitlessness of God. This does not mean that people cannot know Him, but it does mean they cannot have exhaustive knowledge of Him. Believers know Him, and yet there is always more to know. That is why worship is fundamental to understanding Christ.

**Third**, John 1:1-2 proclaims **"the centrality of Jesus Christ."** Because Jesus Christ is God incarnate, He must always be in the center of the believer's approach to God, his thinking about God, and his relating to God (Jn 14:6). The French mathematician and theologian Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), said that the two leading principles of the Christian faith are that "Jesus Christ [is] the object of all, the center to which everything tends. Whoever knows Him understands all things."

**Fourth**, John 1:1-2 proclaim **"the supremacy of Jesus Christ."** Since Jesus Christ shares the nature of God, believers "worship Him without cessation, obey Him without hesitation, love Him without reservation, and serve Him without interruption." ([The Eternity and Deity of the Word- John 1:1-2](#))

**God** (*houtos en* [3SIAI] *en arche pros ton Theon*) - The definite article has been supplied in contrast to Ge 1:1 where it is anarthrous (without a definite article)..

**God** ([2316](#))(**theos**) in the Biblical context refers to the supreme being described in the OT and amplified in the NT in Jesus, the Son of God.

**BDAG** - 1. In the Greco-Roman world the term theos primarily refers to a transcendent being who exercises extraordinary control in human affairs or is responsible for bestowal of unusual benefits,

**Theos** is used for “god” in the Greco-Roman world, whose pantheon was made up of dozens of so-called deities (which were not really gods at all!). In the Septuagint when the plural Elohim refers to the true God, it is consistently translated with the singular theos. “The reason for this was that at the time the Sept. translation was made, Greek idolatry was the prevailing superstition, especially in Egypt under the Ptolemies. Their gods were regarded as demons, i.e., intelligent beings totally separate and distinct from each other. If the translators rendered the name of the true God by the pl. theoi, they would have given the heathen under Greek culture an idea of God inconsistent with the unity of the divine essence and conformable to their own polytheistic notions. However, by translating the Hebr. Elohim as “God,” they inculcated the unity of God and at the same time did not deny a plurality of persons in the divine nature.” ([Zodhiates](#))

**Zodhiates on theos** - The heathen thought the gods were makers and disposers (theteres, placers) of all things. The ancient Greeks used the word both in the sing. and the pl. When they used the pl., they intimated their belief that elements had their own “disposer” or “placer,” e.g., the god of money called mammon (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:9, 13). The heavens were the grand objects of divine worship throughout the heathen world as is apparent from the names attributed to the gods by the ancient Greeks. The Scriptures also attest to this (Acts 7:42, 43; Deut. 4:19; 17:3; 2Ki 17:16; 23:4, 5; Job 31:26, 27; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). The gods the Greeks worshiped were the various aspects of created nature, especially the heavens, or some demons or intelligences they supposed resided in them. For instance, Orpheus, a legendary poet and musician of ancient Thrace, noted for charming animate and inanimate objects with his lyre, called most gods of the Greeks demons. ([Complete Word Study Dictionary- New Testament](#))

**Friberg on theos** - (1) as the supreme divine being, the true, living, and personal God (Mt 1.23; possibly Jn 1.1b); (2) as an idol god (Acts 14.11); feminine goddess (Acts 19.37); (3) of the devil as the ruling spirit of this age god (2Cor 4.4a); (4) as an adjective divine (probably Jn 1.1b); (5) figuratively; (a) of persons worthy of reverence and respect as magistrates and judges gods (Jn 10.34); (b) of the belly when the appetite is in control god (Phil 3.19) ([Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament- Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Mille Timothy Friberg](#))

**Vine on theos** -

(I) in the polytheism of the Greeks, denoted “a god or deity,” e.g., Acts 14:11; 19:26; 28:6; 1 Cor. 8:5; Gal. 4:8.

(II) (a) Hence the word was appropriated by Jews and retained by Christians to denote “the one true God.” In the Sept. theos translates (with few exceptions) the Hebrew words Elohim and Jehovah, the former indicating His power and preeminence, the latter His unoriginated, immutable, eternal and self-sustained existence.

In the NT, these and all the other divine attributes are predicated of Him. To Him are ascribed, e.g., His unity, or monism, e.g., Mark 12:29; 1 Tim. 2:5; self-existence, John 5:26; immutability, Jas. 1:17; eternity, Rom. 1:20; universality, Matt. 10:29; Acts 17:26-28; almighty power Matt. 19:26; infinite knowledge, Acts 2:23; 15:18; Rom. 11:33, creative power, Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11; 10:6; absolute holiness, 1 Pet. 1:15; 1 John 1:5; righteousness, John 17:25; faithfulness, 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 1:9; love, 1 John 4:8, 16; mercy, Rom. 9:15, 18; truthfulness, Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18. See GOOD, No. 1 (b).

(b) The divine attributes are likewise indicated or definitely predicated of Christ, e.g., Matt. 20:18-19; John 1:1-3; 1:18, RV, marg.; 5:22-29; 8:58; 14:6; 17:22-24; 20:28; Rom. 1:4; 9:5; Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:15; 2:3; Titus 2:13, RV; Heb. 1:3; 13:8; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 22:12, 13.

(c) Also of the Holy Spirit, e.g., Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7-14; Rom. 8:9, 26; 1 Cor. 12:11; 2 Cor. 13:14.

(d) **Theos** is used (1) with the definite article, (2) without (i.e., as an anarthrous noun). “The English may or may not have need of the article in translation. But that point cuts no figure in the Greek idiom. Thus in Acts 27:23 (‘the God whose I am,’ RV) the article points out the special God whose Paul is, and is to be preserved in English. In the very next verse (ho theos) we in English do not need the article” (A. T. Robertson, Gram. of Greek, NT, p. 758).

As to this latter it is usual to employ the article with a proper name, when mentioned a second time. There are, of course, exceptions to this, as when the absence of the article serves to lay stress upon, or give precision to, the character or nature of what is expressed in the noun. A notable instance of this is in John 1:1, “and the Word was God”; here a double stress is on theos, by the absence of the article and by the emphatic position. To translate it literally, “a god was the Word,” is entirely misleading. Moreover, that “the Word” is the subject of the sentence, exemplifies the rule that the subject is to be determined by its having the article when the predicate is anarthrous (without the article). In Ro 7:22, in the phrase “the law of God,” both nouns have the article; in v. 25, neither has the article. This is in accordance with a general rule that if two nouns are united by the genitive case (the “of” case), either both have the article, or both are without. Here, in the first instance, both nouns, “God” and “the law” are definite, whereas in v. 25 the word “God” is not simply titular; the absence of the article stresses His character as lawgiver.

Where two or more epithets are applied to the same person or thing, one article usually serves for both (the exceptions being when a second article lays stress upon different aspects of the same person or subject, e.g., Rev. 1:17). In Titus 2:13 the RV correctly has "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Moulton (Prol., p. 84) shows, from papyri writings of the early Christian era, that among Greek-speaking Christians this was "a current formula" as applied to Christ. So in 2 Pet. 1:1 (cf. 1:11; 3:18).

In the following titles God is described by certain of His attributes; the God of glory, Acts 7:2; of peace, Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1Th 5:23; Heb. 13:20; of love and peace, 2 Cor. 13:11; of patience and comfort, Ro 15:5; of all comfort, 2 Cor. 1:3; of hope, Ro 15:13; of all grace, 1Pet. 5:10. These describe Him, not as in distinction from other persons, but as the source of all these blessings; hence the employment of the definite article. In such phrases as "the God of a person," e.g., Matt. 22:32, the expression marks the relationship in which the person stands to God and God to him.

(e) In the following the nominative case is used for the vocative, and always with the article; Mark 15:34; Luke 18:11, 13; John 20:28; (Acts 4:24 in some mss.); Heb. 1:8; 10:7.

(f) The phrase "the things of God" (translated literally or otherwise) stands for (1) His interests, Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33; (2) His counsels, 1 Cor. 2:11; (3) things which are due to Him, Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25. The phrase "things pertaining to God," Rom. 15:17; Heb. 2:17; 5:1, describes, in the Heb. passages, the sacrificial service of the priest; in the Rom. passage the gospel ministry as an offering to God.

(III) The word is used of divinely appointed judges in Israel, as representing God in His authority, John 10:34, quoted from Ps. 82:6, which indicates that God Himself sits in judgment on those whom He has appointed. The application of the term to the Devil, 2Cor. 4:4, and the belly, Phil. 3:19, virtually places these instances under (I). ([God - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

**Theos** - 1317x in 1156v - **NAS Usage:** divinely(1), God(1267), god(6), God's(27), God-fearing(1), godly(2), godly\*(1), gods(8), Lord(1).

Matt 1:23; 3:9, 16; 4:3f, 6f, 10; 5:8f, 34; 6:24, 30, 33; 8:29; 9:8; 12:4, 28; 14:33; 15:3f, 6, 31; 16:16, 23; 19:6, 24, 26; 21:31, 43; 22:16, 21, 29, 31f, 37; 23:22; 26:61, 63; 27:40, 43, 46, 54; Mark 1:1, 14f, 24; 2:7, 12, 26; 3:11, 35; 4:11, 26, 30; 5:7; 7:8f, 13; 8:33; 9:1, 47; 10:9, 14f, 18, 23ff, 27; 11:22; 12:14, 17, 24, 26f, 29f, 34; 13:19; 14:25; 15:34, 39, 43; 16:19; Luke 1:6, 8, 16, 19, 26, 30, 32, 35, 37, 47, 64, 68, 78; 2:13f, 20, 28, 38, 40, 52; 3:2, 6, 8, 38; 4:3, 8f, 12, 34, 41, 43; 5:1, 21, 25f; 6:4, 12, 20; 7:16, 28ff; 8:1, 10f, 21, 28, 39; 9:2, 11, 20, 27, 43, 60, 62; 10:9, 11, 27; 11:20, 28, 42, 49; 12:6, 8f, 20f, 24, 28; 13:13, 18, 20, 28f; 14:15; 15:10; 16:13, 15f; 17:15, 18, 20f; 18:2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 16f, 19, 24f, 27, 29, 43; 19:11, 37; 20:21, 25, 36ff; 21:31; 22:16, 18, 69f; 23:35, 40, 47, 51; 24:19, 53; John 1:1f, 6, 12f, 18, 29, 34, 36, 49, 51; 3:2f, 5, 16ff, 21, 33f, 36; 4:10, 24; 5:18, 25, 42, 44; 6:27ff, 33, 45f, 69; 7:17; 8:40ff, 47, 54; 9:3, 16, 24, 29, 31, 33; 10:33ff; 11:4, 22, 27, 40, 52; 12:43; 13:3, 31f; 14:1; 16:2, 27, 30; 17:3; 19:7; 20:17, 28, 31; 21:19; Acts 1:3; 2:11, 17, 22ff, 30, 32f, 36, 39, 47; 3:8f, 13, 15, 18, 21f, 25f; 4:10, 19, 21, 24, 31; 5:4, 29ff, 39; 6:2, 7, 11; 7:2, 6f, 9, 17, 20, 25, 32, 35, 37, 40, 42f, 45f, 55f; 8:10, 12, 14, 20f; 9:20; 10:2ff, 15, 22, 28, 31, 33f, 38, 40ff, 46; 11:1, 9, 17f, 23; 12:5, 22ff; 13:5, 7, 16f, 21, 23, 26, 30, 33, 36f, 43, 46; 14:11, 15, 22, 26f; 15:4, 7f, 10, 12, 14, 19; 16:10, 14, 17, 25, 34; 17:13, 23f, 27, 29f; 18:7, 11, 13, 21, 26; 19:8, 11, 26, 37; 20:21, 24, 27f, 32; 21:19f; 22:3, 14; 23:1, 3f; 24:14ff; 26:6, 8, 18, 20, 22, 29; 27:23ff, 35; 28:6, 15, 23, 28, 31; Rom 1:1, 4, 7ff, 16ff, 21, 23ff, 28, 32; 2:2ff, 11, 13, 16f, 23f, 29; 3:2ff, 11, 18f, 21ff, 25f, 29f; 4:2f, 6, 17, 20; 5:1f, 5, 8, 10f, 15; 6:10f, 13, 17, 22f; 7:4, 22, 25; 8:3, 7ff, 14, 16f, 19, 21, 27f, 31, 33f, 39; 9:5f, 8, 11, 14, 16, 20, 22, 26; 10:1ff, 9; 11:1f, 8, 21ff, 29f, 32f; 12:1ff; 13:1f, 4, 6; 14:3, 6, 10ff, 17f, 20, 22; 15:5ff, 13, 15ff, 19, 30, 32f; 16:20, 26f; 1 Cor 1:1ff, 9, 14, 18, 20f, 24f, 27ff; 2:1, 5, 7, 9ff, 14; 3:6f, 9f, 16f, 19, 23; 4:1, 5, 9, 20; 5:13; 6:9ff, 13f, 19f; 7:7, 15, 17, 19, 24, 40; 8:3ff, 8; 9:9, 21; 10:5, 13, 20, 31f; 11:3, 7, 12f, 16, 22; 12:3, 6, 18, 24, 28; 14:2, 18, 25, 28, 33, 36; 15:9f, 15, 24, 28, 34, 38, 50, 57; 2 Cor 1:1ff, 9, 12, 18ff, 23; 2:14f, 17; 3:3ff; 4:2, 4, 6f, 15; 5:1, 5, 11, 13, 18ff; 6:1, 4, 7, 16; 7:1, 6, 9ff; 8:1, 5, 16; 9:7f, 11ff; 10:4f, 13; 11:2, 7, 11, 31; 12:2f, 19, 21; 13:4, 7, 11, 13; Gal 1:1, 3f, 10, 13, 15, 20, 24; 2:6, 19ff; 3:6, 8, 11, 17f, 20f, 26; 4:4, 6ff, 14; 5:21; 6:7, 16; Eph 1:1ff, 17; 2:4, 8, 10, 16, 19, 22; 3:2, 7, 9f, 19; 4:6, 13, 18, 24, 30, 32; 5:1f, 5f, 20; 6:6, 11, 13, 17, 23; Phil 1:2f, 8, 11, 28; 2:6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 27; 3:3, 9, 14f, 19; 4:6f, 9, 18ff; Col 1:1ff, 6, 10, 15, 25, 27; 2:2, 12, 19; 3:1, 3, 6, 12, 16f; 4:3, 11f; 1 Thess 1:1ff, 8f; 2:2, 4f, 8ff, 12ff; 3:2, 9, 11, 13; 4:1, 3, 5, 7f, 14, 16; 5:9, 18, 23; 2 Thess 1:1ff, 8, 11f; 2:4, 11, 13, 16; 3:5; 1 Tim 1:1f, 4, 11, 17; 2:3, 5; 3:5, 15; 4:3ff, 10; 5:4f, 21; 6:1, 11, 13, 17; 2 Tim 1:1ff, 6ff; 2:9, 14f, 19, 25; 3:17; 4:1; Titus 1:1ff, 7, 16; 2:5, 10f, 13; 3:4, 8; Phlm 1:3f; Heb 1:1, 6, 8f; 2:4, 9, 13, 17; 3:4, 12; 4:4, 9f, 12, 14; 5:1, 4, 10, 12; 6:1, 3, 5ff, 10, 13, 17f; 7:1, 3, 19, 25; 8:10; 9:14, 20, 24; 10:7, 12, 21, 29, 31, 36; 11:3ff, 10, 16, 19, 25, 40; 12:2, 7, 15, 22f, 28f; 13:4, 7, 15f, 20; Jas 1:1, 5, 13, 20, 27; 2:5, 19, 23; 3:9; 4:4, 6ff; 1 Pet 1:2f, 5, 21, 23; 2:4f, 10, 12, 15ff, 19f; 3:4f, 17f, 20ff; 4:2, 6, 10f, 14, 16f, 19; 5:2, 5f, 10, 12; 2 Pet 1:1f, 17, 21; 2:4; 3:5, 12; 1 John 1:5; 2:5, 14, 17; 3:1f, 8ff, 17, 20f; 4:1ff, 6ff, 15f, 20f; 5:1ff, 9ff, 18ff; 2 John 1:3, 9; 3 John 1:6, 11; Jude 1:1, 4, 21, 25; Rev 1:1f, 6, 8f; 2:7, 18; 3:1f, 12, 14; 4:5, 8, 11; 5:6,



9f; 6:9; 7:2f, 10ff, 15, 17; 8:2, 4; 9:4, 13; 10:7; 11:1, 11, 13, 16f, 19; 12:5f, 10, 17; 13:6; 14:4, 7, 10, 12, 19; 15:1ff, 7f; 16:1, 7, 9, 11, 14, 19, 21; 17:17; 18:5, 8, 20; 19:1, 4ff, 9f, 13, 15, 17; 20:4, 6; 21:2f, 7, 10f, 22f; 22:1, 3, 5f, 9, 18f

**Barry Horner - Applications.** According to **J. C. Ryle**, the truth of John 1:1-2, “honestly and impartially interpreted, is an unanswerable argument against three classes of heretics. It confutes the **Arians** ([Arianism](#)), who regarded Christ as a Being inferior to God.—It confutes the **Sabellians** ([Sabellianism or Modalism](#)), who deny any distinction of Persons in the [Trinity](#), and say that God sometimes manifested Himself as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit, and that the Father and the Spirit suffered on the cross!—Above all it confutes the **Socinians** and **Unitarians** ([Socinianism](#)) who say that Jesus Christ was not God but man, a most holy and perfect man, but only a man.”

**A W Pink** offers this application - If the believer would enter into a better, deeper, fuller knowledge of God, he must prayerfully study the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures! Let this be made our chief business, our great delight, to reverently scrutinize and meditate upon the excellencies of our Divine Savior as they are displayed upon the pages of Holy Writ, then, and only then, shall we “increase in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). The “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” is seen only “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor. 4:6). ([John 1:1-13 Christ the Eternal Word](#))

**Jesus Christ** here transcends the **perverse contemporary representations** of His person that are either born of revision of the biblical record or **ignorance**. The revisionist model, molded according to scholasticism, Hollywood, psychology, humanism, or sentimentality, is usually rooted, not in strict adherence to divine revelation, but rather dominant and polluted subjectivism. As a consequence, the Creator and coming Judge of this universe is scrutinized at the bar of sinful mankind, in much the same way that the Jews, on being advised by Pilate, “*Behold your King!*” responded, “*We have no king but Caesar*” (Jn 19:14-15). The ignorance model, molded chiefly according to vague notions concerning a Jewish carpenter Who taught some helpful ethical principles that assist evolving mankind, is unaware of the biblical claims, especially in the Gospel of John, that Jesus Christ is Who He is revealed to be in Scripture, namely the **incarnation of Jehovah** (Jn 1:14; 14:9).

Either misunderstanding (perversion or ignorance) of Who this Jesus really is often results in the incredulous enquiry from an unbeliever: “***You don’t mean to say that you believe that this Jesus Christ is the only way that anyone can be reconciled to God, do you?***” The answer of the Apostle John would be, in the light of the Prologue revelation, that once you understand who this Person is, you will come to the inevitable conclusion of Jn 14:6, that comes from the very lips of Jesus: “*No one comes to the Father but through Me.*” In the light of Jn 1:1, 3, 10, this Jesus Christ is incomparable insofar as other transient religious figures are concerned. **The first question any searching individual must ask with regard to this Nazarene is this: “Who is He?”** The Prologue answer is plain; once a person grasps the full dimensions of this Jewish Messiah, this divine Son of God, he will come to the conclusions of Peter (Acts 4:12) and Paul (1Ti 2:5) that this person is the unique Savior of the world, Jn 4:42. **Charles Wesley** invites us exclusively to worship Him as such:

Let earth and heaven combine,  
Angels and men agree,  
To praise in songs divine  
The incarnate **Deity**,  
Our God contracted to a span,  
Incomprehensibly made **Man**.

## LOGOS - THE WORD

Background from **William Barclay** ([John Commentary- Daily Study Bible](#))...

### THE JEWISH BACKGROUND

In the Jewish background four strands contributed something to the idea of the word.'

**(i) To the Jew a word was far more than a mere sound; it was something which had an independent existence and which actually did things.**

As Professor John Paterson has put it: “The spoken word to the Hebrew was fearfully alive. ... It was a unit of energy charged with power. It flies like a bullet to its billet.” For that very reason the Hebrew was sparing of words. Hebrew speech has fewer than 10,000; Greek speech has 200,000.

A modern poet tells how once the doer of an heroic deed was unable to tell it to his fellow-tribesmen for lack of words. Whereupon there arose a man “afflicted with the necessary magic of words,” and he the story in terms so vivid and so moving that “the words became alive and walked up and down in the hearts of his hearers.” The words of the poet became a power. History has many an example of that kind of thing.

When John Knox preached in the days of the Reformation in Scotland it was said that the voice of that one man put more courage into the hearts of his hearers than ten thousand trumpets braying in their ears. His words did things to people. In the days of the French Revolution Rouget de Lisle wrote the Marseillaise and that song sent men marching to revolution. The words did things. In the days of the Second World War, when Britain was bereft alike of allies and of weapons, the words of the Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, as he broadcast to the nation, did things to people.

It was even more so in the East, and still is. To the eastern people a word is not merely a sound; it is power which does things. Once when Sir George Adam Smith was traveling in the desert in the East, a group of Moslems gave his party the customary greeting: "Peace be upon to you." At the moment they failed to notice that he was a Christian. When they discovered that they had spoken a blessing to an infidel, they hurried back to ask for the blessing back again. The word was like a thing which could be sent out to do things and which could be brought back again. Will Carleton, the poet, expresses something like that:

"Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;

You can't do that way when you're flying words:

'Careful with fire' is good advice we know,

'Careful with words,' is ten times doubly so.

Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead,

But God himself can't kill them they're said."

We can well understand how to the eastern peoples words had an independent, power-filled existence.

#### **(ii) Of that general idea of the power of words, the Old Testament is full.**

Once Isaac had been deceived into blessing Jacob instead of Esau, nothing he could do could take that word of blessing back again (Genesis 27). The word had gone out and had begun to act and nothing could stop it. In particular we see the word of God in action in the Creation story. At every stage of it we read: "And God said ... " (Genesis 1:3, 6, 11). The word of God is the creating power. Again and again we get this idea of the creative, acting, dynamic word of God. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made" (Psalm 33:6). "He sent forth his word and healed them" (Psalm 107:20). "He sent forth his commands to the earth; his word runs swiftly" (Psalm 147:15). "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). "Is not my word like fire, and, says the Lord, like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). "Thou spakest from the beginning of creation, even the first day, and saidst thus: 'Let heaven and earth be made.' And thy word was a perfect work" (2 Esdras 6:38). The writer of the Book of Wisdom addresses God as the one, "who hast made all things with thy word" (Wisdom 9:1). Everywhere in the Old Testament there is this idea of the powerful, creative word. Even men's words have a kind of dynamic activity; how much more must it be so with God?

#### **(iii) There came into Hebrew religious life something which greatly accentuated the development of this idea of the word of God.**

For a hundred years and more before the coming of Jesus Hebrew was a forgotten language. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew but the Jews no longer knew the language. The scholars knew it, but not the ordinary people. They spoke a development of Hebrew called Aramaic which is to Hebrew somewhat as modern English is to Anglo-Saxon. Since that was so the scriptures of the Old Testament had to be translated into this language that the people could understand, and these translations were called the Targums. In the synagogue the scriptures were read in the original Hebrew, but then they were translated into Aramaic and Targums were used as translations.

The Targums were produced in a time when men were fascinated by the transcendence of God and could think of nothing but the distance and the difference of God. Because of that the men who made the Targums were very much afraid of attributing human thoughts and feelings and actions to God. To put it in technical language, they made every effort to avoid anthropomorphism in speaking of him.

Now the Old Testament regularly speaks of God in a human way; and wherever they met a thing like that the Targums substituted the word of God for the name of God. Let us see how this custom worked. In Exodus 19:17 we read that "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God." The Targums thought that was too human a way to speak of God, so they said that Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the word of God. In Exodus 31:13 we read that God said to the people that the Sabbath "is a sign between me and you throughout your generations." That was far too human a way to speak for the Targums, and so they said that the Sabbath is a sign "between my word and you." Deuteronomy 9:3 says that God is a consuming fire, but the Targums translated it that the word of God is a consuming fire. Isaiah 48:13 has a great picture of creation: "My hand laid the foundation of the

earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens.” That was much too human a picture of God for the Targums and they made god say: “By my word I have founded the earth; and by my strength I have hung up the heavens.” Even so wonderful a passage as Deuteronomy 33:27 which speaks of God’s “everlasting arms” was changed, and became: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and by his word the world was created.”

In the Jonathan Targum the phrase the word of God occurs no fewer than about three hundred and twenty times. It is quite true that it is simply a periphrasis for the name of God; but the fact remains that the word of God became one of the commonest forms of Jewish expression. It was a phrase which any devout Jew would recognize because he heard it so often in the synagogue when scripture was read. Every Jew was used to speaking of the Memra, the word of God.

**(iv) At this stage we must look more fully at something we already began to look at in the introduction.**

The Greek term for word is Logos; but Logos does not only mean word; it also means reason. For John, and for all the great thinkers who made use of this idea, these two meanings were always closely intertwined. Whenever they used Logos the twin ideas of the Word of God and the Reason of God were in their minds.

The Jews had type of literature called The Wisdom Literature which was the concentrated wisdom of sages. It is not usually speculative and philosophical, but practical wisdom for the living and management of life. In the Old Testament the great example of Wisdom Literature is the Book of Proverbs. In this book there are certain passages which give a mysterious life-giving and eternal power to Wisdom (Sophia). In these passages Wisdom has been, as it were, personified, and is thought of as the eternal agent and co-worker of God. There are three main passages.

The first is Proverbs 3:13–26. Out of that passage we may specially note:

“She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy. The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke forth, and the clouds drop down the dew” (Proverbs 3:18–20).

We remember that Logos means Word and also means Reason. We have already seen how the Jews thought of the powerful and creative word of God. Here we see the other side beginning to emerge. Wisdom is God’s agent in enlightenment and in creation; and Wisdom and Reason are very much the same thing. We have seen how important Logos was in the sense of Word; now we see it beginning to be important in the sense of Wisdom or Reason.

The second important passage is Proverbs 4:5–13. In it we may notice:

“Keep hold of instruction, do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.”

The Word is the light of men and Wisdom is the light of men. The two ideas are amalgamating with each other rapidly now. The most important passage of all is in Proverbs 8:1–9:2. In it we may specially note:

“The Lord created me (Wisdom is speaking) at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth; before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep; when he made firm the skies above; when he established the fountains of the deep; when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command; when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always” (Proverbs 8:22–30).

When we read that passage there is echo after echo of what John says of the word in the first chapter of his gospel. Wisdom had that eternal existence, that light-giving function, that creative power which John attributed to the word, the Logos, with which he identified Jesus Christ.

The development of this idea of wisdom did not stop here. Between the Old and the New Testament, men went on producing this kind writing called Wisdom Literature. It had so much concentrated wisdom in it and drew so much from the experience of wise men that it was a priceless guide for life. In particular two very great books were written, which are included in the Apocrypha and which it will do any man’s soul good to read.

**(a) The first is called The Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach, or, as it is better known, Ecclesiasticus.** It too makes much of this great conception of the creative and eternal wisdom of God.

“The sand of the sea, and the drops of the rain,  
And the days of eternity who shall number?

The height of the heaven and the breadth of the earth  
And the deep and wisdom, who shall search them out?  
Wisdom hath been created before all things,  
And the understanding of prudence from everlasting”  
(Ecclesiasticus 1:1–10).

“I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,  
And covered the earth as a mist.  
I dwelt in high places,  
And my throne is in the pillar of the cloud.  
Alone I compassed the circuit of the heaven,  
And walked in the depth of the abyss”  
(Ecclesiasticus 24:3–5).

“He created me from the beginning of the world,  
And to the end I shall not fail”  
(Ecclesiasticus 24:9).

Here again we find wisdom as the eternal, creative power which was at God’s side in the days of creation and the beginning of time.

**(b) Ecclesiasticus was written in Palestine about the year 100 B.C.;** and at almost the same time an equally great book was written in Alexandria in Egypt, called The Wisdom of Solomon. In it there is the greatest of all pictures of wisdom. Wisdom is the treasure which men use to become the friends of God (7:14). Wisdom is the artificer of all things (7:22). She is the breath of the power of God and a pure effluence flowing from the Almighty (7:25). She can do all things and makes all things new (7:27).

But the writer does more than talk about wisdom; he equates wisdom and the word. To him the two ideas are the same. He can talk of the wisdom of God and the word of God in the same sentence and with the same meaning. When he prays to God, his address is:

“O God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word, and ordained man through thy wisdom” (9:2).

He can speak of the word almost as John was to speak:

“For while all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, thine Almighty word leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up filled all things with death; and it touched the heaven but it stood upon the earth” (18:14–16).

To the writer of the Book of Wisdom, wisdom was God’s eternal, creative, illuminating power; wisdom and the word were one and the same. It was wisdom and the word who were God’s instruments and agents in creation and who ever bring the will of God to the mind and heart of man.

So when John was searching for a way in which he could commend Christianity he found in his own faith and in the record of his own people the idea of the word, the ordinary word which is in itself not merely a sound, but a dynamic thing, the word of God by which God created the world, the word of the Targums which expressed the very idea of the action of God, the wisdom of the Wisdom Literature which was the eternal creative and illuminating power of God. So John said: “If you wish to see that word of God, if you wish to see the creative power of God, if you wish to see that word which brought the world into existence and which gives light and life to every man, look at Jesus Christ. In him the word of God came among you.”

## THE GREEK BACKGROUND

We began by seeing that John’s problem was not that of presenting Christianity to the Jewish world, but of presenting it to the Greek world. How then did this idea of the word fit into Greek thought? It was already there waiting to be used. In Greek thought the idea of the word began away back about 560 B.C., and, strangely enough, in Ephesus where the Fourth Gospel was written.

In 560 B.C. there was an Ephesian philosopher called Heraclitus whose basic idea was that everything is in a state of flux. Everything was changing from day to day and from moment to moment. His famous illustration was that it was impossible to step

twice into the same river. You step into a river; you step out; you step in again; but you do not step into the same river, for the water has flowed on and it is a different river. To Heraclitus everything was like that, everything was in a constantly changing state of flux. But if that be so, why was life not complete chaos? How can there be any sense in a world where there was constant flux and change?

The answer of Heraclitus was: all this change and flux was not haphazard; it was controlled and ordered, following a continuous pattern all the time; and that which controlled the pattern was the Logos, the word, the reason of God. To Heraclitus, the Logos was the principle of order under which the universe continued to exist. Heraclitus went further. He held that not only was there a pattern in the physical world; there was also a pattern in the world of events. He held that nothing moved with aimless feet; in all life and in all the events of life there was a purpose, a plan and a design. And what was it that controlled events? Once again, the answer was Logos.

Heraclitus took the matter even nearer home. What was it that in us individually told us the difference between right and wrong? What made us able to think and to reason? What enabled us to choose aright and to recognize the truth when we saw it? Once again Heraclitus gave the same answer. What gave a man reason and knowledge of the truth and the ability to judge between right and wrong was the Logos of God dwelling within him. Heraclitus held that in the world of nature and events "all things happen according to the Logos," and that in the individual man "the Logos is the judge of truth." The Logos was nothing less than the mind of God controlling the world and every man in it.

Once the Greeks had discovered this idea they never let it go. It fascinated them, especially the Stoics. The Stoics were always left in wondering amazement at the order of the world. Order always implies a mind. The Stoics asked: "What keeps the stars in their courses? What makes the tides ebb and flow? What makes day and night come in unalterable order? What brings the seasons round at their appointed times?" And they answered; "All things are controlled by the Logos of God. The Logos is the power which puts sense into the world, the power which makes the world an order instead of a chaos, the power which set the world going and keeps it going in its perfect order. "The Logos," said the Stoics, "pervades all things."

There is still another name in the Greek world at which we must look. In Alexandria there was a Jew called Philo who had made it the business of his life to study the wisdom of two worlds, the Jewish and the Greek. No man ever knew the Jewish scriptures as he knew them; and no Jew ever knew the greatness of Greek thought as he knew it. He too knew and used and loved this idea of the Logos, the word, the reason of God. He held that the Logos was the oldest thing in the world and the instrument through which God had made the world. He said that the Logos was the thought of God stamped upon the universe; he talked about the Logos by which God made the world and all things; he said that God, the pilot of the universe, held the Logos as a tiller and with it steered all things. He said that man's mind was stamped also with the Logos, that the Logos was what gave a man reason, the power to think and the power to know. He said that the Logos was the intermediary between the world and God and that the Logos was the priest who set the soul before God.

Greek thought knew all about the Logos; it saw in the Logos the creating and guiding and directing power of God, the power which made the universe and kept it going. So John came to the Greeks and said: "For centuries you have been thinking and writing and dreaming about the Logos, the power which made the world, the power which keeps the order of the world, the power by which men think and reason and know, the power by which men come into contact with God. Jesus is that Logos come down to earth." "The word," said John, "became flesh." We could put it another way—"The Mind of God became a person."

## **BOTH JEW AND GREEK**

Slowly the Jews and Greeks had thought their way to the conception of the Logos, the Mind of God which made the world and makes sense of it. So John went out to Jews and Greeks to tell them that in Jesus Christ this creating, illuminating, controlling, sustaining mind of God had come to earth. He came to tell them that men need no longer guess and grope; all that they had to do was to look at Jesus and see the Mind of God. ([John Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))