

"THE WORD" IN John 1:1

By Allon Maxwell

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

This opening of John's gospel is widely (and I believe, incorrectly) assumed to teach the deity of Jesus Christ.

"The Word" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *"logos"*. In the original Greek text, *"logos"* does not have the capital first letter given to "Word", in the English translation. It should properly be translated "word" (with a small "w").

Further, although in Greek *"logos"* is a masculine noun, this is no proof of personality. Many words which are neuter in English, are either masculine or feminine in Greek. For example, the word translated "beginning" is feminine. No one would seriously claim that this means that "beginning" should be regarded as having a feminine personality! In the same way it is quite improper to give *"logos"* a masculine personality, or make it into a proper name, as the translators have done. This, unfortunately, reflects more of their theological bias than it does strict accuracy.

The Greek *"logos"* simply means "a spoken word", "a saying", "a communication", etc.

According to Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, it also means the inward thought which is expressed in the spoken word.

John tells us five things about this "word":

- * It was there in the beginning.
- * It was with God.
- * It was God.
- * All things were made through it.
- * This spoken "word" became flesh when Jesus was born.

It helps in understanding these sayings, to know that John wrote his Gospel and his epistles, to expose the falsehood of the Gnostic teaching that God was too remote and too aloof from creation to have done the actual work Himself and instead, did it through an agent.

John is also refuting the parallel false teaching, that Jesus was not really a man.

Jesus was claimed by these teachers, to be a pre-existent spirit who had come down from Heaven, merely assuming the appearance of a man, but without flesh and blood substance, and without the limitations of humanity. As a spirit He was said to be unable to experience temptation and was therefore also unable to sin.

What John says firstly, about God as the creator who spoke the world into existence, and later, about Jesus as the man who came into being by means of that same word spoken by God, is to be understood against this background.

"In the beginning", of course, draws our attention back to the creation story and the **spoken word** in Genesis, where the world is said to have been formed in response to God's word of command.

Nothing was created in the beginning, until God SPOKE the WORD.

When John says that the word was with God, he means simply that the word spoken, had its ORIGIN **with God**. What God said, expressed the thoughts and intentions of **God's** heart.

When John says that the spoken word **was** God, he means that:

- * **It was** God speaking -- not someone else.
- * **It was** God -- not aloof from creation, but directly involved.
- * **It was** God personally doing the work of creating the world -- not an agent.

Thus, in [John 1:3](#), when John says that all things were made through the word, he is describing HOW God made the world.

"God SAID and it was so."

The translation *"made through him"* reflects again, the theological bias of the translators.

We have already briefly explained the peculiarities of Greek gender. The pronoun translated "him", refers back to *"logos"*.

A proper translation into English should recognise the **impersonality** of the Greek masculine noun and render this phrase as, *"came into existence by means of it"*. Without **IT**, (God's spoken word), nothing came into existence. GOD commanded and all was created. ([Psalm 33:6](#) & [Psalm 148:1-5](#))

Finally, John says *"the (spoken) word became flesh"*.

All the Old Testament words.....all the things that God had spoken of old to the fathers, in many and various ways, by the prophets, ([Hebrews 11:1](#)), were fulfilled when Jesus came into being. The same spoken word which foretold all the marvellous details of His person and ministry, caused the virgin conception and birth which brought God's flesh and blood Son into existence, as the pinnacle of creation.

In this chapter, John is not saying that Jesus is God, but that He is THE SON of God. ([John 1:34](#)) He is not saying that Jesus existed in the beginning, but that, like all the rest of creation, He came into existence by means of the same spoken word which caused the things which are seen, to be made out of things which are not seen. ([Hebrews 11:3](#))

Jesus is a REAL man. However He is more, not in His nature or substance, but in the STATUS conveyed by His unique origin as the only BEGOTTEN Son of God. ([John 1:14](#), [John 1:18](#) & [John 3:16](#) NKJV)

He is **THE MAN** who God had in mind as the final goal, when He spoke the word, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"*. ([Genesis 1:26](#))

He is **THE MAN** destined by God's **spoken word**, (LOGOS) for dominion over all the earth. ([Genesis 1:26](#) & [Hebrews 1:5-10](#))

His is the name above every name, at which every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ([Philippians 1:9-11](#))

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