

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

THE PREINCARNATE WORD

By

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John 1:1-5 1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

We speak of the incarnation as that event when God took on human flesh and form and it all began when Christ was born on Christmas Day. We can better understand and appreciate the Christmas incarnation if we examine what the apostle reveals to us about the pre- Incarnate Word.

The little child asks, who made God? This is a natural question, one that is sensible. We recognize intuitively that all things have a beginning. The material world around us obviously had a beginning. We see change occurring. Living things, vegetable and animal, have a beginning and an ending. We all had a birthday. Once upon a time we were born. Whatever story you read can begin *once upon a time*. And we all have a termination point to our physical life in this world.

But of course that is just the point. God had no beginning. He is the self-existent, eternal being who had no beginning, who from everlasting to everlasting is God.

I. WE LEARN THREE SIGNIFICANT THINGS IN VERSE 1 ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD.

A. First we learn; **In the Beginning was the Word**. What does that tell us? Simply this: The incarnate Word is eternal. Before time began God's Word existed. Before anything existed the Word existed. The Word of God has no beginning for in the very beginning there was the Word.

B. Secondly, **The Word was with God**. This tells us that the Word has personality separate and distinct within the Being of God. The Word is not other than God but was with God in the beginning.

C. Thirdly, **and the Word was God**. This statement is as clear as clear can be. The Word is not a creation of God but the Word is himself God.

The sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses wrongfully translates this verse. They say the Word, **was a god**. Why do they do that? Because they follow Arius, a presbyter in the city of Alexandria who began teaching in 318 that Christ, while he was the creator of the world, was himself a creature of God, therefore not truly divine.

For their denial of the deity of Christ, Arius and his followers, were deposed and excommunicated by a council at Alexandria in 321. I should mention that the Arian controversy, while it relates primarily to the deity of Christ also touches the incarnation of God and the deity of the Holy Trinity, which is the very center of the Christian revelation.

But this issue festered in the church, so much so that the emperor Constantine summoned the first universal council in the year 325 at Nicaea to settle the matter. Out of this council came the Nicene Creed, which affirms the deity of Christ. The books of Arius were burned and his followers branded as enemies of Christianity. Unfortunately, the error of Arius or Arianism as it is called, has persisted to this day.

II. VS. 2 HE WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD

A. This verse gives added emphasis to the truth of the fact that the Word could not have been created or have had a beginning at some point in time but the Word himself coexisted eternally in the Godhead. Since God has no beginning and no end but is eternal in his being the Word has ever and always eternally existed with God the Father.

Further confirmation of this fact comes from the lips of the glorified Jesus in heaven when he spoke to John while a prisoner of the Romans on the Island of Patmos.

The risen Lord Jesus said to John, **"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."...** And He placed His right hand on me, saying, **"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.** Rev. 1:8, Rev. 1:17-18

Moving on to verse 3 we read: **All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (See also Colossians 1:15-17)**

B. HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THAT EXISTS

The preincarnate Word is the Creator God. Every single thing that came into being came into being through Him. This statement is all-inclusive. It includes both animate and inanimate matter; both material substances and living creatures, all things have their genesis in the Word of God.

When God said, "Let there be light," he did not speak in order that some subordinate might hear, understand what the speaker wanted, and go and perform the task. This is what happens in human affairs. But the Word of God himself is creator and maker, and he "is" the Father's will. -- Athanasius in *The Wisdom of the Saints*. Christianity Today, Vol. 31, no. 9.

C. John 1:4-5 **In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

In him was life refers to God's own eternal life as God. The spiritual life of God has no beginning and no end. He is the everlasting God. The Word has life in himself.

This life is communicable to men. The evangelist says in verse 4 that the life was the light of men. So we learn that life is equated with Light. This speaks of God's life, eternal life, endless life.

This light is not simply physical light; this is more than rays from a star, the sun or the moon, a candle, light bulb or a laser. This refers to something greater than physical light, though physical light enables us to see the world around us and in that sense it can be considered analogous. But spiritual light refers to knowledge, to truth, to wisdom.

Only man, along with angels, was created with a God righteous potential for life. God created man a living soul. He breathed into him the breath of life. Man has the capacity to know, to understand, to think. When God created Adam and Eve he gave them much more than physical life. He gave them souls to know Him, to receive the light that has in it God's life, eternal life,

But something happened. God ordained one condition for our first parents. They must remain sinless and righteous. They must continue in the righteousness in which they had been created. God's Word commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon pain

of death. Observe just one commandment, not Ten Commandments. Adam and Eve did not keep that one commandment. The penalty for disobedience was death. This death was instantaneous. Physically they lived on for many years, but spiritually they lost their communion with God. And the tragedy of this broken relationship was far greater than they imagined at first. It did not affect them alone. Their loss of spiritual life and communion and their death sentence was passed on to their offspring. All their children were born in a state of alienation and separation from God. Adam and Eve bequeathed to their posterity a legacy of death. Their children were all born with a sinful nature and disposition. As our Confession says, *"By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation."* - COF VI: 2, 3. (See Trinity Hymnal P. 852)

Thus we read in verse 5 of our text: **5The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

III. BECAUSE MEN ARE SINNERS THEY DO NOT COMPREHEND THE LIGHT.

A. The light of God's existence and power is still shining and men have souls by which they can reason and think but because of sin the light of God's Word is not comprehended. Men know there is a God by natural revelation. By seeing the created order they know there is a God, a Creator. But they do not worship him as God. The apostle says of fallen mankind, **Rom. 1:18-20**
18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

The light of God shines but men are so sunken in sin and error that they do not glorify God as God. They are not thankful. They become vain in their imaginations. They claim to be wise and intellectual but they are foolish when it comes to ascribing to God his rightful excellence and glory. God is a

righteous and holy God, a perfect God, a glorious Being with infinite power and knowledge, but they change his glory into an image of a man or a bird or an animal or some creeping thing. They corrupt the truth about God so that the light about God is darkness. They know there is a God but they do not know him at all. Sin has blinded their eyes and corrupted their understanding. The light of God shines but men do not see or comprehend it. They grope about as blind men, fumbling after God with perverted notions, with superstition and all manner of false religions.

B. How are men to comprehend the light and have life? Without God's light there is no life for any man. Only as God communicates the light of the knowledge of the glory of God can men experience the life of God. Man must be regenerated, and that regeneration must come from God. Man does not have within him the ability or power to recover himself out of his darkness and sin. God's Word reveals to us how God communicates his light and life to men.

C. THE WORD OF GOD BECAME A MAN TO REDEEM MAN FROM HIS SINFUL ESTATE

The Author of life, the Giver of life, the fountain of life conquers death by taking upon himself the form and nature of a man. He was born in a dirty manger. You can read the Christmas story and unless you believe the Word of God you won't believe that his birth was the incarnation event that placed God in a human body. It is an amazing fact. He comes to do what the first Adam failed to do. He lives out a perfect and holy life. He had a public ministry for 3 1/2 years. Then he allowed himself to be taken by sinful men to be falsely accused and then crucified as a common criminal. By this act he takes the place of the sinners he came to save. He pays for their crimes, their disobedience, and their sins. Payment for sins committed is exacted of him. He takes upon himself in his own body and soul the wrath of God against you and me. By that substitutionary sacrifice he satisfied the justice of God. And after he was dead and buried on the third day he rose victorious over death. Death could not hold him, for he was God as well as man.

The Light of God is shining to sinners, offering them God's mercy and life on the basis of The Son of God having paid the ransom for their sins with his own blood. He covers their sins from God's righteous wrath simply on the basis of confessing faith in his redemptive work: **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** 2 Cor. 5:21

The Gospel is the light of God shining into our hearts the light and life of Jesus Christ, as the apostle says, **For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:6).**

IV. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S ORDAINED MEANS OF QUICKENING MEN TO THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF CHRIST.

A. Paul said, Rom. 1:16-17 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

1 Cor. 1:18-21 **18For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."**

20Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

B. The Gospel communicates to man's soul the righteousness of God. Christ's redemptive work provides a perfect salvation to satisfy the righteousness of God and make the sinner righteous by imputing to him the righteousness of Christ.

No person can be righteous in the sight of God apart from the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness is communicated by the Gospel and becomes effectual when the sinner believes on Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, even as the evangelist says, John 1:12-13 **But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,**

**13who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the
flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

The all-important question is this, Have you understood and comprehended the Gospel of Christ and believed on him? Are you one who professes a righteousness of God by Jesus Christ's dying for your sins at Calvary's tree? Are you trusting in him today? The Gospel is for whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely. We receive him by repenting of our sins and receiving the new life he offers us through his shed blood. Come to the Light Today! Be saved Today!

Hymn #476 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS

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