

July 6, 2008

“John: The Prologue”  
John 1:1-18

FCF: Thinking God (and possibility of knowing Him) to be remote

**PROPOSITION:** (magnet) Because of who Jesus is and what He has done,  
(anchor) He is worthy of the full measure of our devotion.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

There is a moment in the movie *Jurassic Park* when paleontologist Allen Grant, who has devoted his life to the study of dinosaurs, suddenly comes face-to-face with real, live prehistoric creatures. He falls to the ground, dumbstruck. Why? Well, it’s one thing to piece together an informed but imperfect image of dinosaurs by picking through fossils and bones. But to encounter an actual dinosaur—well, there can be no comparison.

Spiritual searching is evident all around us. And sadly, that searching progresses too often by picking through what we dig up, shopping different faiths and philosophies, piecing together our own informed but imperfect image of the spiritual life. We can do far better. With the record of Jesus’ person and work found in the New Testament, we have an opportunity to encounter the real thing. And there’s just no comparison.

We’re beginning our study through the Gospel of John, beginning where he does with the prologue. Now, generally speaking, prologues serve to set the stage, to establish the tone, to whet the appetite. And such is certainly the case here. Here we learn who Jesus is, what His life is about, and what makes Him worth our attention.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [John 1:1-18](#)

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

If you’ve read anything at all about the growth of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, you have to have wondered what could have motivated the early church to do the things they did. Remember what we said last week about John’s motives for writing his Gospel – the desire to see others come to a saving trust in Jesus, to build people up in the faith, and then to defend that faith. And that these are also the marks of the followers of Christ.

What motivated them to do these things? What steadied them in the midst of a world in which they were surrounded by the competing claims of various philosophies, local pagan deities, and Roman state religion? What emboldened them in the face of hostility? Opposed by the Jewish synagogue, persecuted by the state for being radicals – “atheists” and “anti-religious.” What instilled them with such full devotion – rapt attention, personal loyalty, and complete obedience to Jesus Christ? Simply this – they had been overwhelmed by Jesus, who He is and what He had done. It was Jesus.

It was the reality of the One of whom the Apostle John wrote in this Gospel. And given that reality, they could not help but to give themselves, the full measure of their devotion, to Him. Who Jesus is and what He has done is the subject of John’s prologue, setting the tone for what is to come, showing Him worthy of our full devotion as well.

**I. THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS**

John begins by setting before us the supremacy of Jesus ([READ John 1:1-5](#)).

**A) He Is God**

To the Jewish reader, the message was clear. John is saying Jesus Christ is God.

**1. Who He is – identity**

John’s words echo Genesis – “in the beginning” – speaking to His eternity. He was “with God” – speaking to eternal communion. He “was God” – speaking to His divine nature.

**2. What He has done – activity**

But beyond Jesus' identity we see too His role in creation – present and active. A comprehensive, all-inclusive statement making clear that all things are utterly dependent upon Him. Indeed, all things owing their life to Him – a life that entails enlightenment.

*B) He Is the LOGOS*

The Jewish reader would have immediately picked up on these things. But there was a clear message to the Gentile reader as well. For Jesus is said to be the LOGOS.

1. Explanation

In Greek philosophy, this was the idea of a controlling Reason of the universe, an all-pervasive Mind which ruled and gave meaning to all things – the LOGOS, the Word.

2. Clarification

And John, knowing his readers, taps into this idea, using this image to grab their attention, to build a bridge, to help them to see who the Ultimate Fact of the universe is.

*Application:*

Jesus is the LOGOS. Jesus is God. The Creator became the creature, truly divine and human. Stunning as it may sound, before He became incarnate, He gave life to all things. Now, why does John stress this? To get us ready for something even more stunning. Having become incarnate, He gives life to the spiritually dead – then and now.

Which leads me to this. Who do you thank? For your every breath and all that is, who do you thank? If you are a Christian, a follower of Christ, a partaker of eternal life, who do you thank for this life of everlasting duration and ever-growing depth? John's point is the supremacy of Christ and His full worthiness of our full devotion.

**II. THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS**

Moving from the supremacy of Jesus Christ, John then writes of His uniqueness. When He came, He did not arrive on the scene unheralded (**READ John 1:6-8, 15**).

*A) Comparison with John the Baptist*

A comparison of these two individuals is worth making.

1. History

In terms of their history, we know their mothers were relatives. Unusual circumstances surrounded their conception and birth. God was clearly present even in their infancies.

2. Ministry

Their ministries involved preaching the message that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

*B) Contrast with John the Baptist*

So there are some comparisons that can be made. But then contrasts as well.

1. Priority of Jesus

The priority of the two by the two was Jesus. He is the Kingdom's King. He is the light.

2. Calling of John

John was but a witness, a herald, to the coming of this King and the light. His was to put Jesus first, to draw attention to Him, to prepare the people, and then to get out of the way.

*Application:*

Now, the plan is to take a closer look at John's place and ministry next week. For now, let me draw your attention to this – the uniqueness, the exclusiveness of Jesus.

Ours is a pluralistic age, a time when people say all paths to God are equal. There is a real naiveté to that position, an ignorance and an ignoring of the clear conflicts between the religions and worldviews of our day. There is an arrogance to that position as well, a willing condescension that claims to know the true intent of the pillars of the world's competing faiths. And if you'd like to talk about that, I'd be glad to pursue it.

But my point for now is this. We have no need to be unnecessarily rude or obnoxious. But we have no freedom to say anything less than “Jesus Christ alone is God.” No one can stand beside Him or take His place. He is infinite and measureless. We are to worship Him without ceasing, obey Him without hesitation, love Him without reservation, and serve Him without interruption. Him and Him alone exclusively. Such is His uniqueness that He is fully worthy of the full measure of our devotion.

### **III. THE REVELATION OF JESUS**

But the prologue does not end there. It builds from the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus to this – the revelation of Jesus, the one true manifestation of God Himself.

#### *A) Lord of All*

Jesus, the subject of this book, is set forth as Lord of all (**READ John 1:9-13**).

##### 1. Rejection

Profound irony and tragedy. This One who “enlightens everyone” was shut out – like eyes shut to the sun. Rejected by “the world that was made through Him.” Rejected by “His own,” His people, His home – not comprehending who He is, they rejected Him.

##### 2. Reception

Yet with this rejection there was reception. Some do receive Him and “believe in His name,” committing themselves to this life-transforming relationship. A possibility held forth to everyone – limited not by intelligence, initiation, or pedigree; not by past record, present trials, or future uncertainty. To them is given a new standing – the “right to become children of God” – where earthly status gives way to a place in God’s family.

#### *B) The Incarnation*

John then moves to the wonder of the Incarnation (**READ John 1:14, 16-18**).

##### 1. Concise description

V.14 says the LOGOS, “became flesh” – God became man. The most astonishing event in the history of the universe since the creation of the universe. God the Son, without ceasing to be God, became a human being – visible, audible, tangible. We are also told He “dwelt among us” – a clear allusion to the Old Testament tabernacle, meaning as they saw God then, so we see Him now. John then adds “we have seen His glory.” We have observed, carefully examined, experienced all this. It’s John’s personal confession.

##### 2. Stunning result

Which then leads us to vv.16-18. In Jesus Christ, more has been given than ever before. He is the fulfillment of all that preceded, all the Law and ceremony. In Jesus Christ, more is seen than ever before. All else were types and shadows. Here is God Himself. John says Jesus is “at the Father’s side,” in His bosom. (**READ Milne**), “*It is as if God has reached into his very being and plucked out his own heart in sending Christ to us.*”

#### *Application:*

In light of all this, we are forced anew to acknowledge the lengths to which God has gone in saving us. There’s really nothing like it in any other religion – in the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And so John’s message, even in this prologue, is that we need not doubt if God cares. For Jesus Christ has come. We need not doubt if He knows what we’ve going through. For Jesus Christ has come. Listen to what John is saying. Consider it carefully and take it to heart. God does care. He does know. Jesus is God. And because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He is worthy of the full measure of our devotion.

### **CONCLUSION:**

In some ways, this text is something of a “Christmas in July.” Think of the account in Matthew’s Gospel of the Wise Men, the Magi, for a moment. Why such a journey and such risks? Why the gifts of such astonishing expense and sacrifice? Why such dignified figures bowing before a child? Because of who they knew Him to be. He is God. He came as the “God-baby” and grew to become the “God-man.” Because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He is worthy of the full measure of our devotion.

Listen to Martin Luther’s “Our Little Lord, We Give Thee Praise” ([READ lyrics](#)):

*Our little Lord, we give Thee praise  
That Thou has deigned to take our ways  
Born of a maid a man to be  
And all the angels sing to Thee  
The eternal Father’s Son He lay  
Cradled in a crib of hay  
The ever-lasting God appears  
In our frail flesh and blood and tears  
What the globe could not enwrap  
Nestled lies in Mary’s lap  
Just a baby, very wee  
Yet Lord of all the earth is He*

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