

CHRISTOLOGY

WEEK 1

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OUTLINE

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

THE CHRIST AND THE LOGOS Why Start with John 1? Doctrine from John

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Many of us possess enough information about Jesus Christ to state or affirm certain basic doctrines: his membership in the trinity, his incarnation and sacrifice, etc. In spite of this, Jesus remains a somewhat opaque figure in our minds. This course will dive deep into the person, character and work of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture during these distinct periods: (i) his pre-incarnate activity as the Word, (ii) his incarnation and earthly ministry, (iii) his present place at God's right hand and (iv) his work in the last days. Students will walk away with not only with more concrete doctrinal understanding but also with a greater heart of praise at the gloriousness of the triune God.

COURSE GOALS

1. Clarify key biblical doctrines on the identity and work of Jesus Christ and demonstrate their roots in Scripture.
2. Provide students with the ability to make sense out of larger portions of Scripture both in their own private reading and in their work with others.
3. Cultivate a deeper sense of God's historically revealed glory in Jesus Christ.

A QUALIFICATION

There will be things you'll wish I would cover, and I won't. We must remember this:

John 21:25—And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

Jesus' earthly ministry (let alone his identity!) could fill libraries. There is no way to cover everything.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ **Attendance** You must attend 4 of 5 classes to receive credit.
- ▶ **Readings** You must turn in 3 of 4 of the reading assignments.

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Week	Topic	Homework Due
8/16	1	"In the Beginning Was the Word"	–
8/23	2	Pre-Incarnation	John 1:1-18 Judges 13
8/30	3	Incarnation & Earthly Ministry I	Phil 2:5-11; Heb 1-2 Col 1:15-22
9/6	4	Incarnation & Earthly Ministry II	Romans 3:22ff Hebrews 7:1-10:18
9/13	5	Seated with the Father, Reigning Forever	Psalms 110 Daniel 7:9-14

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BEGINNING WITH JOHN

I'm going to begin with John 1. Here are a couple of reasons why:

1. (Directly) John's Prologue discusses the eternal identity of Jesus Christ in the abstract.
2. (Less Directly) John's Prologue exhibits literary features that indicate its importance in John's mind.
3. (Less Directly) The nature of *John* and its design:
 - ▶ John's entire book is about believing who Jesus is (John 20:30-31).
 - ▶ John's Prologue foreshadows much of the book.
 - ▶ Therefore, the Prologue is a distillation of key concepts about Jesus' identity.

CONCENTRIC FORMAT

John's prologue exhibits a concentric format, sometimes referred to as a chiasm (shaped like the greek letter χ).

	John 1	Topic/Theme
A	1-5	The Word as God's Revelation
B	6-8	John the Baptist (Ministry)
C	9-11	The Word in the World
X	12-13	Believe+Receive=Become
C'	14	The Word in the World
B'	15	John the Baptist (Testimony)
A'	16-18	The Word as God's Revelation

Aside from the prologue exhibiting high literary craft (in itself signals importance), the center of the chiasm is roughly similar to the purpose statement of the whole book.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Sometimes the purpose of a book is left implicit (Genesis, Psalms) and the reader must infer its purpose from its themes and emphasis.

Fortunately, John is explicit:

John 20:30,31—Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

JOHANNINE THEMES IN PROLOGUE

Topic	Prologue	Gospel
Pre-existence of Logos/Son	1:1-2	17:5
In Him was life	1:4	5:26
Life was light	1:4	8:12
Light rejected by darkness	1:5	3:19
Light not quenched by darkness	1:5	12:35
Light coming into the world	1:9	3:19; 12:46
Christ not received by his own	1:11	4:44
Being born to God and not of flesh	1:13	3:6; 8:41-42
Seeing his glory	1:14	12:41
“One and only son” <i>monogenes</i>	1:14,18	3:16
Truth in Jesus Christ	1:17	14:6
No one has seen God except...	1:18	6:46

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THE CHRIST AND THE LOGOS

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OUTLINE OF DOCTRINE

1. Introduction to Logos
2. The Logos and the Trinity
3. The Logos and Revelation
4. The Logos and Mission
5. The Logos and Incarnation

WHY JOHN USES 'LOGOS'

Much has made of John's use of 'logos.' Here are some possible allusions:

1. Stoics philosophers used 'logos' to mean divine reason that is both seminal in creation and active in its ongoing maintenance.
2. Philo of Alexandria, Jewish neo-Platonist, used 'logos' to denote a number of things: the mind of God, the agent of creation, the mediator between God and creation, and even primal or ideal man.
3. The Old Testament widely uses the concept of God's Word and its function in creation, revelation, judgment and deliverance.

Very likely, John had a few of these in mind; nevertheless, we are primarily obligated to pay attention to how John uses the word.

Although he might be invoking certain images, he departs from the secular sources in notable ways and expands upon the Old Testament concepts.

THE LOGOS AND THE TRINITY

The opening statement proffers a rhythmic and concise statement of monotheistic trinitarianism:

- 1:1A *In the beginning was the Word*—There is an instant sense that John is drawing the reader's attention to Gen 1:1, identifying the Word as the agent of creation. If any doubt remains, John continues in v.3, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."
- 1:1B *The Word was with God*—The word is not wholly identical with God, indicating at least some diversity within the God-head. (Trinitarian)
- 1:1C *The Word was God*—Again, John lays all doubts it to rest about the identity of the Word. (Monotheism)

There is unity and diversity within the God-head which is a uniquely Christian concept.

THE LOGOS AND THE TRINITY

In line with the *logos* imagery, scholars have drawn out an analogy as follows—

Jesus : God-head : : Word (orthographic/phonetic particular) : Concept

The same way that words convey “hidden” ideas, a central function of the Logos is to reveal God’s nature and function as His agent within His creation.

Within the Prologue, we find this support:

- 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
- 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

THE LOGOS AND THE TRINITY

Here are some parallel passages:

- ▶ Hebrews 1:1-3a—God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation [*charaktēr*] of His nature , and upholds all things by the word of His power.
- ▶ Colossians 1:15-17—He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
- ▶ I Corinthians 8:6—yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

What can we infer from these that would relevant to our relationship with God?

THE LOGOS AND THE TRINITY

What can we infer from these?

1. The nature of God is fundamentally relational—within the Godhead there is a society of three persons (cf. marriage).
 - ▶ Without this, human relational capacities would be ungrounded.
 - ▶ Without this, God might have created man because he needs us—he'd be incomplete without us (cf. Acts 17:25).
2. If Christ's main mission was reconciliation, then that suggests that love and reconciliation is at the core of God's values
3. God is willing to endure the *human* experience (1:14—*the Word became flesh*) in life, death and in receiving our due judgment
4. (More abstract) Jesus is the End of revelation. He is the fullest and last Word from God.
 - ▶ All there was to learn before is summed up in Christ (1:17—*the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Christ.*)
 - ▶ There is nothing new to learn (Cf. Koran, Book of Mormon).

YOUR WORD IS A LIGHT TO MY PATH

If the language of *logos* was not enough, John presses Jesus' special role in revelation even further:

John 1:4-5; 9—In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. . . .⁹ There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

What are some distinct lessons about the Logos from this section?

YOUR WORD IS A LIGHT TO MY PATH

What are some distinct lessons about the Logos from this section?

1. The imagery of light more obviously emphasizes the *practical* aspects of revelation:
 - ▶ Very little can be accomplished in literal darkness, though much can be accomplished in silence.
 - ▶ Comparably, to refer to men as in darkness emphasizes our hopelessness without Jesus.
2. The light brings *spiritual life* not just action.
 - ▶ John can't mean ordinary life because then it would make no sense what Jesus is bringing.
 - ▶ Likewise, John can't mean ordinary knowledge since, again, the Bible doesn't teach that humans know nothing at all without Christ
 - ▶ We can act some and know some but Christ brings the thing we need most, the thing that no amount of human action or knowledge will bring: eternal life.

INCARNATION

The Incarnation (when God became man) will be the center point of week 3. Here, John writes:

John 1:14—And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Some lessons from this passage:

- ▶ Up to this point, the Word's identity is highly exalted—equal with God and essential to the creation—but no indication that he *could be* human, much less *is* human. Indeed, such exaltation suggests the opposite. It is now clear that God in the person of the Word became a man.
- ▶ The Word *became* flesh, which means he could not merely appear to be human (cf. docetism).
- ▶ The expression “dwelt among” could be translated “tabernacled among,” a deliberate reference to curious mix of transcendence & immanence inherent in the tabernacle (cf. Exodus 29:46).

THE MISSION

The Prologue of John also draws out Jesus' mission:

*John 1:7; 12-13—[John] came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. . . .
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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Jesus' mission/work will be the focus of Week 4. At this point, the atonement is not explicit but the idea of universally available rebirth through belief in Christ instantly raises questions about sin, atonement and the sacrificial system. *How could a dirty Gentile become God's child!? How could belief be enough?!*

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