

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

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## **JOHN 1 v 1a - "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD"**

### Introduction

The Christian's greatest desire should be to have a deeper love for God, and a closer friendship with Him. This will develop out of our knowledge of Him, rather than through mere feelings (Philippians 3 v 8 – 10). Certainly, a dynamic friendship will never come out of a cold legalistic framework of faith and behaviour. God treated Moses as a friend (Exodus 33 v 11) and He taught Moses a very special name for Himself that no one had heard before (Exodus 3 v 14 – 15 and 6 v 2 - 3). Through this name Moses came to really know and understand God and then went on to walk with Him very closely. Every new name revealed by God in the Old Testament, and each of the many names we have for Jesus in the New Testament, teach us something additional about the divine being and character. This understanding of who God is offers us a growing level of friendship with Him (John 15 v 15). In this study we focus on one of the names of Jesus - the Word, or Logos. This name is of great importance as not only does it give us a profound insight into God's nature, but also it opens up a real scriptural explanation for some of the recent scientific revelations about the way life works. The result of understanding all that this name brings to our attention should be that we draw even closer to the Lord (1 John 1 v 1 – 3). With Thomas, as we learn the truth about Him, we just respond with love and worship, humbly exclaiming: "My Lord and my God" (John 20 v 28).

John had a wonderful friendship with Jesus, based on his intimate understanding of the Lord. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote his Gospel to explain Jesus' true nature (John 20 v 31) and he starts with this amazing name. Then at the end of verse 1, John explains that the Word, Jesus, was God. People who do not accept the Deity of Jesus or the Holy Spirit - Unitarians of whatever sort, including Jehovah's Witnesses - have based their view partly on the fact that the literal Greek in verse 1b states; "a god was the Word". It is true the noun in the Greek language is impersonal (a god), but this merely reflects the lack of any knowledge of the one true personal God Himself within Greek history and culture. Religiously, the Greeks were a polytheistic people; they worshipped many gods. Just to be safe, the Greeks in Athens even deferred to "an unknown god" (Acts 17 v 22 - 23). John, a devout Jew, just would not write anything to suggest that there was more than one God, so he is not taking a polytheistic position. It is clear, then, that he must be ascribing full Deity to Jesus. Strangely, by using the literal Greek "a god" to describe Jesus here in their very unreliable version of the Bible, the Jehovah's Witnesses appear to have ended up as polytheists themselves!

In verse 2 John goes on to tell us that the Word was with God at the beginning. Athanasius in the fourth century wisely commented: "The Father has never been without His Son". If, as some claim, Jesus was created at a point in time, God could not have been a Father prior to that. His whole character would have changed from whatever it was beforehand into fatherhood on the creation of His Son. But we are told in both Old and New Testaments that God never changes (Malachi 3 v 6 & James 1 v 17 - 18), so the Father/Son relationship must have existed from eternity past as an intrinsic part of God's nature.

Greek philosophers had an idea that there is a basic principle behind the whole creation but did not know what it is. They called this principle the Logos. Through the New Testament we now know the Person behind the principle. For the purpose of this study, we will consider three aspects of the truth underlying this name (the Word, or Logos) given to Jesus in John chapter 1 – Communication, Revelation and Information.

## 1. In the beginning was – Communication

The idea that we have evolved from the higher species of primates runs into difficulties when we consider our communication abilities. These are so far superior to animal life that they help to define us as human beings. By “communication” we include all the essential features of inter-personal relationships – language, reasoning, self-consciousness, love, responsiveness, faithfulness, diversity, conscience, responsibility. John explains where true communication comes from: “The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” So, although the Word is Himself Deity, He is distinct from God (the Father), but He is in perfect communication with His Father and always has been. Scripture also shows us that the Holy Spirit has a similar status and relationship with the Father and the Word. While we refer to our God as a Trinity, three persons in one, we are not worried that the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible. It is a very useful term to describe what is there. What we do find in the Bible is this perfect communication, which eternally bonds three distinct but co-equal persons within the Godhead - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three different personalities are the essential components of God’s being. If the Trinity did not exist God would be a single remote being and communication could not be part of His basic nature, as He would not have had anyone with whom to communicate. The result would be pantheism or, perhaps, a legalistic tyranny, either of which is the type of god unitarian faiths tend to end up believing in.

We read in Genesis 1 v 26 - 27 that when it came to humanity, God said: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness”, and proceeded to do so. As we are made in God’s image, we are designed to reflect the nature of the Trinity. Firstly, just as communication is the outstanding feature of the relationships within the Trinity, we have been given this amazing ability to communicate personally with each other, and with God. We are meant to enjoy the full range and depth of communication as the most wonderful part of what it is to be a person. Secondly, in the same way as there are the three co-equal personalities within the one Godhead, we all have individual but equally important personalities within our shared and communicating humanity.

It has always been the desire of Satan to destroy these God-given and God-glorifying features by corrupting our communication abilities and true individual identity. He has done this through tribalism in more primitive cultures and by religious and political totalitarianism in many societies over the years. Even in our post-Christian western cultures there is a growing and frightening tendency to enforce conformity and deny our legitimate individuality. We are ending up with ever more talk, but ever less meaningful communication. Satan seeks to pursue his goal by breaking our communication with God through disobeying Him (sin), breaking our communication with others through pride, and ruining our confidence in our individuality within ourselves by self-centredness. These were exactly the three elements of Satan’s temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4 v 1 – 11) and were comprehensively dealt with by Him by means of His reference each time to God’s Word. Sadly, very few people seek a restored communication with God through faith in Jesus and in His atoning sacrifice at Calvary. In consequence communication with fellow humans is fraught with difficulty and unfulfilled hope, and many people have a limited sense of their own worth, and much insecurity, spoiling the value of their individuality.

However, it was Jesus who told us that He, the Word of truth, would set us free (John 8 v 32 & 36). Through repentance and a personal relationship with Jesus we find the one and only way we can each be fulfilled as a person, for He alone can teach us our own unique value as an individual (Luke 15 v 4 – 7, Galatians 2 v 20b). Then, the active work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, given to us by Jesus, will enable each of us to develop responsible, communicating personhood, based as it is on the three-fold personhood of God and the perfect communication that exists between the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is the Lord’s purpose that as we become restored in Him, through faith, the quality of our communication and unity together will be a clear demonstration to the world of the nature of the Trinity (John 17 v 20 - 23). This is a major function of the Church or, at least, should be, but the unity must be real, not contrived.

Our unity here within the Church is, in turn, a foretaste of the eternal and complete oneness we will all share in Heaven as members of the Lord’s body - His bride and joint-heir. This is the wonderful picture we have in Ephesians 5 v 25 – 27 & 32. Then we shall be a complete image of the oneness of the Trinity, and our inter-personal communication will also be perfect (1 Corinthians 13 v 12b). We do not have to try to work out the details of that glorious state of affairs here and now. 1 Corinthians 2 v 7 – 10a gives us enough excitement in the anticipation of what awaits us. What the Word does tell us now is that, in the knowledge of our future glory, we should earnestly seek to get ourselves ready (1 John 3 v 1 – 3).

## 2. In the beginning was – Revelation

Throughout human history mankind has sought to understand the great mysteries of the universe: why there is something rather than nothing; how it came about, and why; who or what lies behind the amazing design, order and variety in creation; whether there are other dimensions or even other universes; etc. The story of religions, philosophies, theories and myths represents man's attempts to look beyond the here and now and find the answers to these deepest of questions. Jesus' own claim is that, as the Word, He came into the world to reveal the truth about God, God's love for the human race and our planet, and God's plan for the redemption of the creation (John 3 v 16). Now, two thousand years after Jesus' coming, and especially since the Protestant Reformation, the evidence is overwhelming that the understanding He has given us is the best revelation by far (John 1 v 9 & 16 - 18). When compared to His message, all other faiths and philosophies pale into unrealistic nonsense - dangerous nonsense in many cases.

Right from the beginning it has been Satan's goal to undermine the revelation of God's truth. In the Garden of Eden, he offered Eve an alternative way of looking at what God had said (Genesis 3 v 1 - 5). It seems that Satan does not mind what people believe, even false religions, as long as they do not believe the truth. Jesus sums up the whole of Satan's activity in John 8 v 44 by calling him a murderer of the truth - a liar. These lies that take hold of people's hearts and minds are described by Paul as the "devil's schemes" and part of our responsibility is to stand against them (Ephesians 6 v 11). This is the reason we are given the spiritual armour and engage in spiritual warfare. A major part of our duties is to love deeply and declare fearlessly the objective truth revealed to us by the Word (Jude v 3), but this is sadly neglected in many churches, even among evangelicals. It is no substitute just to preach about subjective experience and human opinion.

We now have a wonderful framework of understanding about the transcendent and eternal spiritual dimension, our own individual spiritual and eternal nature, the reason why we are here, and God's plan for our restoration. This understanding is based on what Jesus was, taught and did while He was here, together with the inspiration given by the Holy Spirit through the minds and hearts of many people, both before and after Jesus' appearance in the flesh. By God's divine providence the whole inspired revelation has been brought together as the inerrant Word of God, the Bible. This amazing book, the written Word, has stood the test of time and withstood all attempts to discredit and destroy it. The effect of the teaching of the Bible in general, and of Jesus in particular, on world history and human knowledge is incalculable. The Word, written and in Person, has presented us with an eminently satisfying worldview. It satisfies our intellect, our sense of reason, our instinct for justice and morality, our emotions, our most basic hopes and fears. As the Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias has pointed out, it is only through the Word that the whole of life is revealed with much bigger and clearer eyes than our own. Thus, our worldview is something the atheists will never be able to see and appreciate, blinded as they are by their own prejudice against God and the Word.

## 3. In the beginning was – Information

Words (by which term we include information and instruction) come first in every action and event. "In the beginning was the Word"; words are always at the beginning of everything. Without words being thought, communicated or exchanged first no structure can be erected, no event staged, no activity undertaken, no arrangement made, nothing created. No computer or any other item of electronic hardware, however clever, will function without appropriate prior instruction, known as software. (I am using Word to write this on my computer!) David Mansell rightly states in his powerful little hymn: "Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it, for by His power each tree and flower was planned and made." This aspect of Jesus' place in the great scheme of things is foundational to an understanding of the work of creation. Scripture states it time and again: John 1 v 3, Colossians 1 v 16 - 17, Hebrews 1 v 2b - 3a (where not only is the Word the agent of creation but continues as the perpetual sustainer of creation, too). We can add others to these references, including Psalm 33 v 6 and Hebrews 11 v 3, as well as the frequent mention of God speaking creation into existence in Genesis chapter 1. Indeed, Hebrews 11 v 3 states that God spoke the visible creation into existence out of what was not visible. Words are not visible, whether written or spoken. They may be marks on paper or sound waves in the air, but the real importance of words are the ideas, information, or instructions they convey, whatever language is used.

The atheist's argument falls down at this point as he or she says that natural means and processes can explain everything. Words are not natural means; they are, at root, spiritual. They originate outside the natural processes of physics, chemistry and biology and come from the deepest part of the speaker's being, whether the speaker is God or a human being. And yet we now know that all living organisms, of whatever complexity, have

information (words) as their source, not natural processes. Put simply, DNA lies at the heart of all life forms, and DNA contains the required set of instructions that is necessary to convey life from the author of the instructions to each organism. John 1 v 4 tells us “in Him [the Word] was life”. So, He, the Word, is that author of all life, not just of spiritual life - every particle in every strand of DNA in every cell in every living organism throughout time: the real “God particle”? We are told every human has between 10 trillion and 100 trillion cells, all unique to that person. These cells, each a miniature factory, continually provide all the proteins necessary for that human body to grow, function and repair itself (the repairs are presently limited by the bondage to decay, otherwise known as the Curse, Romans 8 v 20 - 21). Every cell contains the necessary set of instructions, and in the case of humans this is enough information in each cell to more than fill the complete Encyclopaedia Britannica.

John goes on to tell us (John 1 v 14) that the “Word became flesh”, and even when Jesus was here on earth amazing things happened when He spoke. “Just say the word”, said the centurion to Jesus in Matthew 8 v 8, using the term “logos”, rather than “rhema”. He clearly understood that Jesus was somehow involved with the basic principle of creation, causing the Lord to gasp in astonishment at the depth of his faith. “Do whatever He tells you”, Mary told the servants at the wedding in Cana (John 2 v 5), and when they did a considerable change in the DNA of that particular volume of water was the immediate result. There was the “loud voice” which reversed the decomposition of Lazarus’s body, restored his life, and returned his spirit (John 11 v 43 - 44). (This reminds us of the “loud command” that will raise all departed believers at the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4 v 16.) Conversely, the fig tree died because the Word that had given it life in the first place refused to sustain it any longer (Mark 11 v 14 & 20). There are so many other examples of the life-changing ministry of the Word in the Gospels. The “miracles” were real, but Jesus was not an illusionist or magician. He just exercised authority over the natural processes He had spoken into operation originally.

Turning from the quantum (smallest) scale to the cosmic (largest) scale, the creation works only because of the fixed constants, the laws of physics, which obey exact values throughout the whole universe. Jeremiah 33 v 25 tells us God has established His covenant (words again) with “the fixed laws of heaven and earth”. Physicists tell us that quantum physics and cosmic physics appear to be irreconcilable, at least to their present understanding. But we are told in 1 Corinthians 15 v 38 – 41 that the same divine author established each area of creation for different purposes, according to His own will. There is therefore no reason why they should all follow one unified pattern of creation, especially as scripture does not support the idea that everything evolved from a single big bang. Diversity is one of the hallmarks of God’s creation.

We also note that when Jesus effectively speaks the word of eternal life into a human soul then that person becomes a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5 v 17). Maybe we sadly underestimate the full nature and power of the Word that comes into our beings by means of the Holy Spirit when we receive the Lord by faith. Paul then explains the incredible truth that God uses us to convey this Word to others (2 Corinthians 5 v 18 – 20). What a privileged responsibility! But one day the bondage to decay will be over and Jesus the Word will speak the fullness of His resurrection life into every atom (Matthew 19 v 28a, Acts 3 v 21a, 1 Corinthians 15 v 26). And then, ultimately, the renewed Heaven and Earth will be fully and gloriously revealed (Revelation 21 v 1 - 5).

## Conclusion

As ever, we need to make the Lord Jesus Christ the very centre of our worship, daily living, and Gospel proclamation. We can be especially relevant today when we declare Him, as the Word, to be:

- a) The One who enables each of us to enjoy the restored ability to communicate peacefully with God and our fellow humans, and to be the really fulfilled person we are meant to be (the Way).
- b) The only source of all true revelation about divine, spiritual, and eternal matters (the Truth).
- c) The author of all the information that creates life, sustains it and also recreates it (the Life).

But there, Jesus told us all this in John 14 v 6 long, long ago.