

“The Word Who Stepped Into His World”

1. Isaiah 40:5

We begin a new series this morning from the gospel of John. We worked through 3rd John last week, completing our series on the Epistles of John. Since we were already in tune with John’s writing I thought we would work through the Gospel of John, the last of the Gospels for me to preach through.

Author:

In a very strict sense, the forth Gospel is anonymous. The name of the author is not specifically given in the text. But that really is to be expected since a Gospel is different than an epistle. None of the four gospels identify the author by name.

Internal evidence for the Apostle John as the author is quite extensive.

John 21:7 (ESV)

*7 That **disciple whom Jesus loved** therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.*

The disciple whom Jesus loved is one of the 7 mentioned in:

John 21:2 (ESV)

*2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, **the sons of Zebedee**, and two others of his disciples were together.*

Then we add:

John 13:23–24 (ESV)

*23 One of his disciples, **whom Jesus loved**, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, 24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.*

We then go through many other verse and end up with John being the only disciple/apostle to be identified as the Disciple Jesus loved. John, one of the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman.

External Evidence includes many early church leaders who attributed the forth gospel to John. Polycarp spoke of John as the author. He also reports have met and studied with John. Irenaeus heard Polycarp and reported that John was the author of the 4th gospel. Polycrates, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and other later fathers support this tradition. Eusebius was specific that Matthew and John of the apostles wrote the two Gospels which

bear their specific names.¹ There is very little doubt of John being the author of the Gospel of John.

Place of Origin:

The tradition is very strong that John came to Ephesus after the church had been planted by the apostle Paul. Eusebius writes about John living in Ephesus in his Ecclesiastical History. This is supported by John's writing in Revelation.

Revelation 1:9–11 (ESV)

*9 I, **John**, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*

John was in exile on the Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor, close to Ephesus, when he wrote the book of Revelation.

¹ Blum, Edwin A. 1985. "John." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, 2:266–67. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The first church he addressed was Ephesus. There remains little doubt among New Testament Scholars that John wrote the book from Ephesus.

Date:

Most New Testament Scholars date the book to between 85 AD and 95 AD. Some attempt to date the gospel to as late as 150 AD because of its similarity to gnostic teachings. But as we saw working through the Epistles of John, the early church was beset with false doctrine teaching of the Gnostics very early. So it makes sense that as John combated the false teaching there would be similarity in words and phrases.

Purpose:

John gives us his purpose for writing the gospel in:

John 20:31 (ESV)

31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So that his readers would come to believe in Jesus, the Messiah, the son of God, and because of your trust have eternal life. Writing much later than the other gospels, by as much as 60 years later, it is also believed that John was writing to

supplement the other Gospels, and as we stated earlier to fight the Gnostics and docitists. The gospel also has a great salvific gospel presentation.

John is different from the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John's gospel focuses on Jesus' Divinity. John does not present Jesus' genealogy, birth, baptism, temptation, casting out of demons, parables, transfiguration, instituting of the Lord's Supper, His agony in Gethsemane, or His Ascension.² Rather John focuses on His ministry in Jerusalem, the feasts of the Jewish nation, Jesus' contacts with individuals in private conversations, and His ministry to His disciples.³ The major body of the Gospel is contained in a "Book of Signs" (2:1–12:50) which embraces seven miracles or "signs" which proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. This "Book of Signs" also contains great discourses of Jesus which explain and proclaim the significance of the signs. For example, following the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1–15), Jesus revealed Himself as the Bread of Life which the heavenly Father gives for the life of the world (6:25–35). Another notable and exclusive feature of the Fourth Gospel is the series of "I am" statements that were made by Jesus.⁴

² Blum, Edwin A. 1985. "John." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, 2:268. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

So, with that bit of background let's begin to dig into the Gospel of John.

John 1:1–2 (ESV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

I should point out that the definite article is not present in the original Greek, but Greek Grammar is different than English Grammar and the definite article is explicitly implied. Some poor scholars have tried to make something out of the lack of definite article, but there is no case to be made there.

There is a definite allusion to Genesis 1:1 by John.

Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:1–2 (ESV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

John introduces the subject of the gospel as the λόγος (Logos), was in the beginning, and was with God and was God. It is kind of a unique statement. Linking the “λόγος (Logos)” to creation and to God was specifically intended.

John is introducing the subject of the Gospel, Jesus, his friend. The personified Word of God. John’s use of λόγος (Logos) to describe Jesus seems odd to us in our context. But in the ANE context describing Jesus as the Word λόγος (Logos) was in keeping with the usage of the day. It was a loaded term in the Grecco-Roman World.

In the Greek Philosophical context, the use of λόγος (Logos) implies the universal underlying law that keeps the cosmos in balance. For Stoic Greek Philosophers, which were quite strong in John’s world λόγος (Logos) was divine reason. So to the Greek mind John was equating Jesus was the force that maintained the universe.

For the Jews of the late 1st Century the Greek λόγος (Logos) reminded them of the Old Testament (Dabar) in Hebrew. The Jews recognized that the Old Testament was not just words but it was in fact from God and active creative life-giving force. God created by His word. Jewish wisdom literature reflects God as a master craftsman. Then in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament ties it to the Greek Word λόγος (Logos).

In the Jewish paraphrase’s of the Old Testament God was often referred to as “the Word of the Lord.” For God shielded

Abraham," they might say "The Word of the Lord shielded Abraham. So for the Jewish reader the use of λόγος (Logos) immediately the idea of the creative power, presence and revelation of Yahweh would have been seen.

For Hellenistic Jews, the Jews not in Israel who were heavily influenced by Greek thought λόγος (Logos) has particular influence. Philo of Alexandria who lived about the time of Jesus wanted to harmonize the Hebrew Old Testament with Greek thought and philosophy. He wrote a great deal about λόγος (Logos). Philo describe the λόγος (Logos) as the instrument of creation and the intermediary between a transcendent God and the universe. Philo even called the λόγος (Logos) the “firstborn son of God and the Image of God.

John puts all of that together and calls Jesus the λόγος (Logos) in:

John 1:14 (ESV)

*14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son
from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The λόγος (Logos) became a human in human flesh and dwelt among us. For the Greek world the flesh was inferior to the spiritual world so to become flesh was a condescension. For the Hebrew mind the idea that God would walk among them was a

staggering claim. John presents the creative force of the universe as God and as human walking among us mere mortals. John then doubles down on Jesus as the creator.

John 1:3 (ESV)

3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John states it twice for emphasis. All things were made by and not anything made without Him. John was making it very clear, the universe is the creative act of Jesus, who was with God and was God, and also human.

While not overtly stating in this passage that Jesus is not only the agent of creation but also the active sustainer of creation, it was understood by the early readers.

John 1:4 (ESV)

4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Life, the Greek word ζωή (Zoe) was understood to be more than a biological thing. It was a continuous gift that required constant maintenance. In Psalm 104:29-30 the Psalmist notes that if God hides His face or takes away their breath they will be DRT. By John saying life resides in Jesus the λόγος (Logos) John is

saying that within Jesus lies the permanent reservoir of life. Greek Stoic thought λόγος (Logos) was considered the immanent rational force animating and holding all physical matter together.

So, by calling Jesus the λόγος (Logos) John was reminding his readers that Jesus created it all and constantly maintains it all. In the ancient mindset, a building doesn't need its architect to keep standing, but an echo needs the voice to keep sounding, and a shadow needs the light to keep appearing. By framing the cosmos as existing *through* the Logos, John presents creation as a dependent reality. If the Logos were to cease His active involvement, the "through-ness" is broken, and creation collapses.

John 1:4–5 (ESV)

*4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it.*

John also calls Jesus the light of men. Light representing the good of God and Darkness representing the opposition by Satan. All of Satan's forces and tactics failed to overwhelm Jesus and the Good He brings from God. Just like the failure of Darkness to overwhelm the light when you turn on the light switch in a dark room or Harper jumps up and down with her light up

sandals. Darkness is always overrun by light. Light never flees from darkness.

These first five verses form the prolog to the rest of the gospel. John introduces to his readers God in the flesh, Jesus, transcendent God who created and maintains it all. John the briefly pivots.

John 1:6–8 (ESV)

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The John named here is not the Apostle John but John the Baptizer. John functioned as a witness of the light from God to point people to the light.

John the Baptizers goal was to point people to Jesus, the light of the world, the light of God. By pointing people to Jesus people could believe. John does not explicitly state here that the belief results in eternal life but he will develop that doctrine fully in the gospel.

John the baptizer came not to build up his own reputation but to point to Jesus.

After the brief mention of John the Baptizer John move back to the light of God.

John 1:9 (ESV)

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

The difficulty in this verse is determining who or what was coming into the world. Was it the light coming into the world or the people coming into the world receiving the light. Most conservative New Testament Scholars teach that “was coming into the world” refers to Jesus not the people being saved.

John is saying that the light, Jesus, the creator/sustainer of the world was actually coming into the world. He would state that even more clearly in a couple of verses.

John 1:10 (ESV)

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

John next identifies Jesus as the creator of the world, but the world did not know Him. The World or κόσμος (kosmos) is a theme seen in the Gospel of John. John uses κόσμος (kosmos) more than 70 times in the Gospel.

I love the design of this verse. In this one verse John states the incarnation of Jesus, the creation by Jesus, and the rejection by the world of Jesus.

Despite being the creator/sustainer of the world, the world does not know its creator. John is very clear about the reality that the world has rejected Jesus.

John 1:11 (ESV)

11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Jesus came into His own creation but those He created did not receive Him. John had a front row seat for the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, God's chosen people. John watched as the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin worked to execute Jesus. He watched as Jesus was beaten and tried in made up kangaroo courts. He watched as the nails were driven into his hands and feet. He watched as the thorns were crammed down onto Jesus head. He watched as Jesus was stabbed by the soldiers spear. He watched as John asked His father to not hold this against them because they did not know what they were doing. He saw it all.

John also saw as his friends the other apostles were executed because they preached the gospel from Jesus.

But John still had hope.

John 1:12–13 (ESV)

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John is establishing very early in the Gospel the message of salvation. Receiving Jesus, believing in His name results in becoming children of God. So what does receive mean and what does believe mean?

The word receive is the Greek word λαμβάνω (lambano) not passive at all. The English translation almost make passive but it is very active with the idea of taking a hold of or grasping. We do not sampling accept or receive like we receive a cold. We actively have to grasp onto Jesus. Of course you can't do that on your own power, God grants to you the ability to do that.

Believing in Him is more that a mental assent that Jesus actually exists. Believe here is the idea of trust and dependance. If you believe in Jesus and trust Him for your future Jesus gives us the right to become Children of God. Believing and trusting in God gives us the right to be adopted by the creator sustainer of the universe.

John 1:14 (ESV)

*14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son
from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John closes his prolog with a definitive statement that the creator/sustainer of the universe stepped into the box of creation. John witnessed that first hand. John saw Jesus display the glory of God, full of grace and truth.

Conclusion

God spoke the world into existence. He then dispatched Jesus, co-equal God, member of the triune Godhead to step into the box of creation and called Him the Word of God. The expression of God in bodily form. He brought light into the dark world, just like in creation.

The light in creation came on day one but the sun was not created until day four. Where did the light come from? From God.

That incarnation provides for us to be adopted as children of God. Empowered by God to believe in His and trust Him for our future.

The question that follows then is: do you believe and do you trust Jesus, the creator/sustainer of the world, the light of the world, to save you and protect you for the future?

Let's pray!