

Jesus – The Word Became Flesh
John 1:1-4, 14-15

With a puzzling introduction, what is the apostle John saying in the opening of his gospel? How would you go about solving this conundrum? Grab your magnifying glass Sherlock Holmes!

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:1-4, LSB)

1. Using imagery, John 1:1-4 seems to associate “the Word” with Jesus. Does the immediate context of the passage (surrounding verses) confirm this initial impression? What evidence do you have?

2. One method that Sherlock Holmes would use is to investigate “the Word.” Since we’re using the Legacy Standard Bible translation, go to “lsbible.org” and search “the word.” Limit your search to the gospels when Jesus was alive on earth. What do you observe from this concordance search? List any verses that might help you understand the association with Jesus and “the Word.”

Here are some examples of what you might find with this search. Whenever you do this, it helps your study when you include some context to the results of the search. Try it yourself and share your observations!

Testimony from the last Old Testament prophet John the Baptist (Luke 3:2):

For He whom God has sent speaks the **words** of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. (John 3:34-35, LSB)

The words of Jesus:

“Therefore everyone who hears these **words** of Mine and does them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew and fell against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. And everyone hearing these **words** of Mine and not doing them, may be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” Now it happened that when Jesus had finished these **words**, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matt 7:24-28, LSB)

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My **words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:34-38, LSB)

The Spirit is the One who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the **words** that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63, LSB)

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all so long and have you not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The **words** that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (John 14:8-10, LSB)

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My **word**; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My **words**; and the **word** which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. (John 14:23-24, LSB)

3. Now reexamine John 1:1-4. There are at least three statements that the apostle John is stating. What are they? What does this all mean? Does it help to know the meaning of Jesus' name? How does this help you understand John 1:14-15?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:1-4, LSB)

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Teacher Notes

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1. Using imagery, John 1:1-4 seems to associate “the Word” with Jesus. Does the immediate context of the passage (surrounding verses) confirm this initial impression? What evidence do you have?

Remind the student of what a figure of speech is – picturesque words that describe something that is not literally applicable. In this instance, “The Word” is a metaphor for Jesus.

An example of a passage in the immediate context is:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has been ahead of me, for He existed before me.’” (John 1:14-15, LSB)

Here John the Baptist is making a direct association of “the Word became flesh” to Jesus Christ.

2. One method that Sherlock Holmes would use is to investigate “the Word.” Since we’re using the Legacy Standard Bible translation, go to “lsbible.org” and search “the word.” Limit your search to the gospels when Jesus was alive on earth. What do you observe from this concordance search? List any verses that might help you understand the association with Jesus and “the Word.”

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Help the student see that the more one observes the text, the easier it becomes to understand it; God's word interprets itself. If the student extended his study went beyond the concordance search of "the word," there would be more information to help one understand a confusing passage.

Jesus speaks the words of His Father with the authority of His Father. That Jesus Himself expresses that all authority has been given to Him can be seen elsewhere (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 6:37-39; 13:3; 17:2).

Jesus establishes the legitimacy of His words alongside of the God's word and by extension God Himself. This adds another dimension to understanding the apostle John's statement:

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18, LSB)

3. Now reexamine John 1:1-4. There are at least three statements that the apostle John is stating. What are they? What does this all mean? Does it help to know the meaning of Jesus' name? How does this help you understand John 1:14-15?

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. 3) All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4) In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:1-4, LSB)

Help the student observe that John 1:2-4 explains John 1:1.

"In the beginning was the Word,..." (John 1:1, LSB)

When the apostle John opens his introduction with "in the beginning," there is a reference to the beginning of Creation: **In the beginning** God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1).

The student may get the impression that Jesus was created at Creation; however, the apostle John's Greek phrase for "in the beginning was the Word" literally should be translated as, "when the beginning began, the Word was already there." The apostle John was clearly stating that Jesus existed before Creation.

“... and the Word was with God,..” (John 1:1, LSB)

The apostle John’s Greek phrase here conveys the idea that the Word is equal to and distinct from God. The context of the Greek phrase implies a fellowship and coexistence with God.

“... and the Word was God.” (John 1:1, LSB)

The apostle states clearly to the deity of the Word. Associating the article “the” with “Word” establishes “the Word” as the subject of the phrase, and “God” is describing the nature of “the Word.” The Word is the same nature of God, divine yet a separate person.

“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” (John 1:4, LSB)

In union with His Father the invisible God, and pre-existed before He came into being on earth, the Greek name “Jesus,” is a translation of the Hebrew name Yehôšûa' and it means "Yahweh is help" or "Yahweh is salvation."

The Old Testament prophesizes of the coming "Yahweh is salvation," and the New Testament records His presence on earth proclaiming the Good News. God’s word became flesh.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has been ahead of me, for He existed before me.’” (John 1:14-15, LSB)

Encourage the student to see that taking the time to understand a figure of speech (like “the Word”) enables one to understand its use elsewhere in the Bible. This clarity results in good theology and a more accurate application of God’s word to one’s life.