

The Word Made Flesh John 1:1-13

by John Nelson Darby

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Word of God, expressing God clearly in a distinctive personal glory, and asserting His creation and life as the light that shines in darkness.

Scripture: John 1:1

Topics: "The Divinity of Christ", "The Light of the World"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound significance of the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, which asserts the personal glory of Jesus as both God and man. He explains that Jesus, the Word, existed before creation and is the source of life and light for humanity, distinguishing Him from all creation. The chapter highlights the darkness of the world that fails to recognize Him, despite His divine nature and the light He brings. Darby also notes the role of John the Baptist as a witness to this light, underscoring the importance of believing in Jesus to become children of God. Ultimately, the sermon calls for believers to honor and make known the glory of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gospel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter. The object of the Holy Ghost is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as this opening chapter of his Gospel. His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinct language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Ghost; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Ghost were not. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God who alone was the Word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into the world, but "in the beginning was the Word" when there was no creature. Before anything came into being that was made, the Word was in the beginning with God; not merely in God, as if merged or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before a creature existed. He "was in the beginning with God." This is of immense importance, and with these truths our Gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterwards. "All things were made by him." There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that which had none, causing to exist by His own will

and power. Now all things exist by the Word: and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit has added, "and without him was not anything made that was made."

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made: "In him was life." It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. "In him was life." Not that this life began to be: all else, all creation, began to be; and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence. But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature.

96 It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but in Him was life. Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called the light of angels but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They were kept by divine power and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

And this "light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." It is striking to remark here the entire passing over of all the history of the world of which we are apt to make so much, yea, even of the dispensational dealings of God with men. All is passed by very briefly indeed - those ages that man thinks all but interminable, in which God gave being to the creature and in which He may have changed over and over again the various forms of the creature, where science is endeavouring to pursue its uncertain and weary way. All this is closed up in the few words, "All things were made by him." Scripture, and this chapter in particular, summarises it with striking brevity. "All things were made by him." The details of it were left completely aside. What was good for us to know we are told in Genesis 1. There is nothing like that chapter even in cosmogonies which borrowed from it. And all that man has thought or said or written about a system of the world is not to be named with it for depth or certainty, as well as for simplicity, in the smallest compass.

But there is a reason why all such matters vanish after two or three words. It is because the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, is the object that the Holy Ghost is dwelling on. The moment that He is brought out creation just pays Him homage, owning Him to be the Creator, and is then forthwith dismissed. "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." It is enough to say that He created all. He remains in His own grace. Now we learn what is the Spirit's object in this. It was not to give us details of the creation; it was to acquaint us with Jesus as the light of men.

97 In what condition then did He find men? Were there not great differences among them, as was thought? There were some, most indeed, idolaters, yet wise and prudent, worshipping stocks and stones; and others who were not idolaters but very zealous for the law as given by Moses. Not that a word is said yet about the law, nor about any differences, but that the Word of God was the light that manifested everybody: whether Jews or Gentiles, they were only darkness. It is not therefore only that the physical creation is passed by most curtly, but the moral world is closed with almost equal brevity. "The light shineth in darkness," and whatever the boasting of the Gentiles, and the law of the Jews (which was real as compared with the Gentiles), here all is measured and put out, as it were, by the true light, the Word of God. Jew or Gentile, they are but darkness, and the light shines in darkness, and spite of all its pretension

and pride, the darkness comprehended it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." When the Holy Ghost is come down, things are also tested and convicted by Him; and He is brought forward by Paul somewhat as John here introduces the Son of God. It shews how poor all of man is in comparison with God, and how little he is capable of appreciating the truth in the Son or by the Spirit.

Then we find John brought in. The reason why he is singled out from all others I believe to be this: he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord Jesus. He would surely not have been named here if it were not, because he was the moon that derived its light from the sun - from the Lord Jesus just about to come. His was only a derivative light, and he seems brought in here because of that peculiarity. Other prophets were too distant from Christ, but John was near enough to be an immediate precursor of the Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe." It is no question of law-testing or proving. All this was very important in its place; but the glory that the law had is completely eclipsed by a brighter glory. Scripture therefore takes pains to say, John "was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light." He might be a burning and a shining lamp (as it ought to be in chapter 5), but he was only an earthly and derived light. "He was not that light." "That was the true light"; Jesus is the light, the true light, which (as rightly rendered) on coming into the world lighteth every man. It is speaking of the effect of Christ's coming into the world. It is not every man that cometh into the world; but that, when He comes into the world, He is the One that casts His light on every one here below. There had been a time when, as it is said in the Acts, God winked at the ignorance of men; but now everything must appear in its own light or rather darkness, because the true light was come; and therefore when He comes into the world He lights every man there: all are brought out just as they are and none can escape. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him"; and the awful result of this darkness was that "the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

98 The world was guilty enough, it was so dark that it did not even know Him; the Jews had abundance of truth by which they might know Him, but their will was still more set against the Son of God than even the poor Gentiles. "His own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [title or right] to be children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a blessed place! and blessed to know that this is our place to which grace has entitled us now in His name! May we seek to make Him known to every creature with all our hearts in the measure of power the Lord has given us, honouring thus, and in every other way, the Lord Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost loves to honour.

We have other glories of His brought out afterwards. We hear of Him as the Son, the Lamb of God, the Baptist with the Holy Ghost, the King of Israel, and the Son of man. All these are successively unfolded to us in this chapter. Indeed it would be difficult to say what glory of our Lord is not presented here except that of Priest and of Head of the church. John never gives us the priesthood of Jesus. He touches what is close on it, when He speaks in his first epistle of advocacy with the Father; but the business of John was to shew His divine personal glory, yet as man on earth. Priest was what He was called to be in heaven; and as Head of the church He is there also. But John shews us what He was in Himself as coming from heaven, and that He does not lose one whit of His glory by becoming a man. In His being Priest and Head of the church we see special glories which He received on going up to heaven, and these Paul develops fully. John's point is God and the Father manifested on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

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