

IN THE
BEGINNING
WAS THE...
WORD
A STUDY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LESSON 3 – The Word is...BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

FACILITATOR'S Note

MAIN POINT THIS WEEK: *Jesus existed before the creation of all there is (1:1-3; 8:58; 17:5, 24).*

The following lesson is designed to help class participants understand that Jesus, as the Son of God, has always been. This can be a difficult concept to grasp as it is unlike anything in our life experience. After all, Jesus was born in the flesh, and grew from infancy into adulthood, just like each of us. He laughed, cried, sat in His mom or dad's lap as a child, slept when His body was tired, and ate when He was hungry – just like us. Yet, unlike us, the Son of God existed prior to coming into the world as a human being. This is a strange concept which can be difficult to accept, but as this lesson will show, Jesus' teachings and claims about Himself force each of us to either accept that He has always been, or reject Him entirely as Savior and Lord – there really is no middle ground. Spend time today helping your class participants understand this truth.

Remember, this semester we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS). Help them with that today.

HEAD → HEART → HANDS

As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by digging into the Word and specifically the text for each of the weeks. **This week the texts are: 1:1–3; 8:58; 17:5, 24.** As you move through the Word, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Understand that Jesus existed before the creation of all there is, i.e., that He has always been.
- Understand that He has always been because He is God.
- Understand how controversial that message was in His time and even today.
- Recognize that we were made through Jesus and for Jesus.

DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- Do you have difficulty understanding the concept of eternity? Why or why not?
- How would you help someone understand this concept and the idea of time not existing?

KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From the Gospel of John

- 1:1-3
 - Key Points
 - One of John's main objectives is to establish who Jesus really is. John opens his Gospel with the bold claim that Jesus has always been, that is, that He has always existed since the beginning, and that He is in essence, God.
 - John explains the eternal, divine nature of Jesus by referring to Him as "The Word." In last week's lesson, the significance of the use/choice of this title was discussed, and the key points were:
 - Per Genesis 1, it was by the power of God's spoken Word that the universe came into being. The Hebrews recognized the power of God's Word and revered it.
 - God relates personally with His people through His Word, both spoken and written. He used His Word to create them, teach them, and discipline them.
 - John's opening words in vs. 1-2, "In the beginning, ..." tie back to Genesis 1:1 and the biblical account of creation. John's intent is to make it clear that Jesus (The Word) is God, and as such, already existed at the beginning, prior to the creation.
 - In v. 3, John makes it clear that Jesus (The Word) actually took part in the act of creation; in fact, EVERYTHING was made through Him – no exceptions.
 - Critical points to grasp:
 - The Word has always existed, before the creation.
 - In a later lesson, we will discuss the fact that Jesus is the promised Messiah; the Jewish (OT) scriptures allude to this Messiah's eternal (pre-creation) existence:
 - (Micah 5:2) But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.
 - (Isaiah 9:6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 - The Word was **not** created. "Without him, nothing was made that has been made," implies that the Father did not create the Son. Though Jesus was a human born well after the creation, Jesus is the incarnate Word: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (1:14)
 - The Word took part in the creation of the universe, that is, EVERYTHING.

- Jesus' work in creation is discussed in the NT:
 - (Colossians 1:15-17) The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (see **Note**). For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers 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.
 - **Note:** The firstborn over all creation does not mean he was the first thing created; it means He is pre-eminent over all creation and due the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, especially the son of a king (as used for David, see Ps. 89:27)
 - (Hebrews 1:1-2) In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Does it matter whether we believe/understand that Jesus has always existed, and that He created the universe?
 - Can we believe that Jesus came into the world by a miraculous birth, and that He was even raised from the dead and is alive now, but that He had no existence prior to His birth? Discuss.
- 8:58
 - Key Points
 - Jesus' claim, "... before Abraham was born, I am" enraged his Jewish listeners.
 - Clearly, Jesus claims to have existed prior to Abraham, the Jews revered patriarch who had lived nearly 2000 years earlier.
 - As discussed last week, His use of the term "I am" was startling to many, as this was a revered term, which God Himself coined as His own name when talking to Moses in the burning bush. By applying this term to Himself, Jesus in essence claimed to be God, an act of blasphemy which, if not true, deserved punishment by death.
 - Note that His use of the term "I am", not "I was", emphasizes His eternity of being, as part of the Godhead, and not simply being which has persisted through several centuries.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Is Jesus' claim that He is God consistent with His claim that He existed prior to Abraham? Can one claim be true while the other is false? Discuss.
- 17:5, 24
 - Key Points
 - Chapter 17 recounts Jesus prayer to the Father, in the presence of His disciples, prior to His imminent death on the cross. He has completed His ministry on earth,

having done all the Father wanted, and is facing the final act through which He will bring glory to the Father and receive glory from His Father: the cross

- In verse 5, Jesus plainly states that He existed before the world existed, i.e. prior to creation, and that He shared glory with the Father.
- In verse 24, Jesus desires that His disciples see His glory, the glory which the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world, because the Father loves Him.
 - That the Father gave Him (or shared with Him) glory implies that Jesus was part of the Godhead. (The OT makes it clear that God will not give His glory to another, yet He gives it to Jesus – e.g. Is 42:8; 48:11)
 - *Before the foundation of the world* indicates that the personal relationship between the Father and Son did not begin at some specific point but that it has always been, eternally, because the Father and the Son (Jesus) have also always been.
- Contemporary Application
 - In general, people viewed the cross as an instrument of shame, so why did Jesus seem to view it as the path/means to true glory?
 - What did it cost Jesus, The Word, to become flesh and live as one of us? What did He have to give up? What did He gain?
 - Consider Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

UNDERSTANDING HEART

- Why would John make the point in his gospel that Jesus has always been?
- All things that were made -- that includes you and everyone you know -- were made through Jesus and for Jesus. Is this message important to communicate to others, and if so, how can we do that?

WISDOM HANDS

- Think of someone you know (e.g. a family member or friend) who needs a personal (saving) relationship with Jesus. Spend time praying for them, asking God to bless them and to open their heart to His word. And ask Him to use you, placing you in the path of those whom you can best share the message with. (Isaiah 6:8)

PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Thank Him for sending His Word into the world (and enter time and death) in order to save us. What a great God we serve!

CLASS OUTLINE

"...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." (John 20:31) The Gospel of John was written so that those who read its message may believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, THE CHRIST. The following outline holds the major themes expounded on in the Gospel of John in order that its readers may believe in Jesus and have eternal life. (Adapted from the "Key Themes" outline in the ESV Study Bible):

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (January 4)
2. THE WORD IS...
GOD (January 11)
 - a. Jesus is GOD
 - b. 1:1–2, 18; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:30–33; 20:28
3. THE WORD IS...
BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD (January 18)
 - a. Jesus existed before the creation of all there is.
 - b. 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24
4. THE WORD IS...
OMNISCIENT (ALL KNOWING) (January 25)
 - a. Jesus has supernatural knowledge that only God can possess.
 - b. 1:48; 2:4, 19, 23–25; 3:14; 4:17–18; 6:51, 70; 8:28; 9:3; 10:15, 17–18; 11:4, 14; 12:24, 32; 13:10–11, 38; 21:18–19
5. THE WORD IS...
THE MESSIAH AND SON OF GOD (February 1)
 - a. Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God prophesied in Old Testament.
 - b. 1:36, 41, 49; 3:18; 4:25, 29; 5:25; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24, 36; 11:4, 27; 12:34; 19:7; 20:30–31
6. THE WORD IS...
THE "I AM" (February 8)
 - a. Jesus is the "I AM" from the Old Testament. He is Yahweh/Jehovah.
 - b. 4:26; 6:20, 35, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1; 18:5–6 (cf. Ex. 3:14–15; Isa. 41:4; 43:10–13, 25; 45:18; 51:12; 52:6)
7. THE WORD IS...
THE SON WHO WAS SENT BY AND REFLECTS THE FATHER (February 15)
 - a. Jesus was sent by God and reflects the very essence of the Father.
 - b. 3:17, 35–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1
8. THE WORD IS...
THE FULFILLMENT OF JEWISH FESTIVALS/INSTITUTIONS (February 22)
 - a. Jesus fulfills the Jewish festivals and institutions found in the Law (even the temple itself).
 - b. 1:29, 36; 2:14–22, esp. v. 21; 4:23–24; 8:12; 9:5; 19:14
9. THE WORD IS...
THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE (March 1)
 - a. Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in Him.
 - b. 1:4; 3:15–16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 39–40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47–48, 51, 53–54, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 25, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2–3; 20:31

10. THE WORD IS...

A MIRACLE WORKER (March 8)

- a. Jesus performs signs and wonders that demonstrate that He is the promised Messiah.
- b. 2:1–11, 13–22; 4:46–54; 5:1–15; 6:1–15; 9:1–41; 11:1–44

11. THE WORD IS...

TESTIFIED BY OTHERS TO BE THE MESSIAH (March 15)

- a. Witnesses testify that Jesus is the Messiah.
- b. 1:7–8, 15, 19, 32, 34; 3:11, 32–33; 4:39; 5:31–39; 8:14, 18; 10:25; 15:26–27; 18:37; 19:35; 21:24

12. THE WORD IS...

UNIFIED WITH FATHER AND SPIRIT IN THEIR WORK OF REVELATION AND REDEMPTION (March 22)

- a. Father, Son, and Spirit are united in their work.
- b. 14:17–18, 23, 26; 15:26; 20:21–22

13. THE WORD IS...

THE BASIS OF SALVATION (March 29)

- a. It is by Jesus' death that God brings His people salvation.
 - i. 1:29; 3:14–15; 6:51–58; 10:15; 11:50–52; 12:24; 15:13
- b. God is sovereign in salvation.
 - i. 3:21; 5:21; 6:37–45, 64–65; 10:16, 26–30; 15:16; 17:2, 6, 9

14. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONFESS AND BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH (April 12)

- a. Salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.
 - i. 1:12; 3:15, 16; 5:24; 6:29, 35; 8:24; 11:25–27, 42; 12:44; 17:8, 21; 20:31
- b. The benefits of salvation can be experienced here and now (in this evil age), but will be fully known when He returns.
 - i. 3:18, 36; 4:23; 5:24; 6:39–40; 10:10, 26–29; 11:25–26

15. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONTINUE JESUS' WORK AND MISSION (April 19)

- a. Believers are called upon to continue the work of the Savior in order that all men may know and be saved.
- b. 4:38; 15:16; 17:18; 20:21–22

16. CONCLUSION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (April 26)