

John 1:1-18^{vii} viii

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 without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

^{vii} **About the Gospel: John 1:1-18**

The prologue to John's gospel is in the form of a hymn in stanzas. John may have adapted an earlier Christian or even pre-Christian hymn. For Greeks (and Hellenistic Jews), the Word (Greek, Logos) was the rational principle of the universe, giving meaning to all existence. For Jews, the word of God expressed God's eternal purpose active in creation, in revelation and in redemption.

The repetition of the phrase grace and truth (vv. 14, 17) underscores both the nature and mission of Jesus: He

came “full of grace and truth” (v. 14)—that is, as the source of grace and truth—and he came to impart that grace and truth to those who “believed in his name” (v. 12).

Jesus’ nature and mission combine to proclaim him as the ultimate revelation of God (1:18), not an aloof appearance of a transcendent and impersonal deity, but an in-the-flesh person who “lived among us” and calls us to know God, receive God and live in the light of God.

^{viii} **Reflection and Response**

Every human life is a mixture of joy and sorrow, light and dark. We know the thrill of reunion, the anticipation of holiday, the joy of wedding or birthday. Yet we also experience our share of illness, anxiety and grief. The ringing of the phone could pivot either way: “I got the job!” or “our friend died this morning.”

The prologue to John’s gospel introduces the same two themes in Jesus’ life. He enjoyed meals with his friends, the beauty of lakes and flowers. He also wept at Lazarus’ death and was betrayed by Judas. Because he entered fully into human life, he knows intimately our highs and lows. Furthermore, he assures us that the darkness cannot triumph.

According to John 1, God brings all things into being and enlightens everyone—Buddhists, Muslims, agnostics—who comes into the world. The final verse describes the only Son resting on the Father’s heart. The purpose of Jesus’ life is that of every human life: to rest in God. So at the last supper, the beloved disciple reclines in the same position (13: 23). Both at the beginning and end of John’s gospel stands a parallel direction to the beloved: remain in me.