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### Expanded Outline

#### I. The living Word made flesh (Prologue) (1:1-18)

Summary: John introduces Jesus with the term, "The Word." John opens his gospel like Mark. There is not genealogy or birth narrative. John's intent is to demonstrate that the Son of God has always existed, He is eternal in nature, and in fact, has created all things (1:1-5). His incarnation is mentioned from the divine perspective of why he came to earth (1:6-18; cf. especially vv. 9, 12-13, 17-18), rather than from the human perspective of those who first beheld a newborn babe and wondered what he would become. From the outset, then, John's Gospel presents Jesus as God's Son-in fact, as God in the flesh.<sup>1</sup> All creation is His author. Nothing has come into existence without His creative energy and genius. With regard to humanity, the Word brings life, real life, a light that dispels

##### A. His essential nature (1:1-5)

- 1. In relation to God (1:1-2)

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

##### a. His identification with God

v. 1 - "in the beginning" has to recall Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God ..."

compare:

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God ..."

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, ..."

"was ..." - indication of the Word's pre-existence. If he "was in the "in the beginning" point in time, then he had to pre-exist prior to the "in the beginning" point in time.

"the Word" - original word, 'logos,' λόγος (The idea of communication and revelation, also creative power. The phrase "in the beginning" reminds one of Genesis 1:1 and the creating which God did by his spoken word.)

"He does not bring the term 'son' into his opening sentences at all; instead, he speaks first of the Word. There was no danger of this being misunderstood; Old Testament readers would pick up the reference at once. God's Word in the Old Testament is His creative utterance, His power in action fulfilling His purpose. The Old Testament depicted God's utterance, the actual statement of His purpose, as having power in itself to effect the thing purposed. Genesis 1 tells us how at creation 'God said, Let there be ... and there was ...' (Gen. 1:3). 'By the word of the LORD were the heavens made ... he spake, and it was done' (Ps. 33:6, 9). The Word of God is thus God at work." J. I. Packer, p. 48.

What John teaches us here about the deity of Jesus Christ is consistent with what the Old Testament taught about the promised Messiah. The Old Testament prophets indicated that the coming Savior was going to be a man, of the seed of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, and David (Genesis 49:8-10; 2 Samuel 7:12-14). They also indicated that the Savior would be the eternal God:

- b. The logos – expression of God

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Wallace, The Gospel of John: Introduction, Argument, Outline  
([http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page\\_id=1328](http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=1328))

## c. Eternally existent

he has always existed, before He became Jesus of Nazareth, He was God, the second person of the Trinity.

## 2. In relation to creation (1:3)

**{3} Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**

- a. The Author and Creator of all things
- b. The divine Agent of creation

Now, in verse 3, John goes on to show that our Lord was not only present at the beginning, but He was the source of all that had a beginning. The **“Word”** was not passive, but active, the One through whom all things came into existence. He was not created; He was the Creator. He did not merely create all things *for* God, He created all things *as* God. All things came into being through Him. The **“Word”** spoke, and all things came into existence. As the Creator, He is the origin, the source of life.

*(Col 1:15-20) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. {16} For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. {17} He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. {18} And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. {19} For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, {20} and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

## 3. In relation to man (1:4)

**{4} In him was life, and that life was the light of men.**

- a. The source of life
- b. The source of light

John now draws upon the imagery of **“light”** introduced in Genesis 1, applying it once again to the **“Word.”** In Genesis, one of the first things Moses tells us is that God called light into existence (1:3). God then separated the **“light”** from **“darkness”** (1:4). After creating **“light,”** God created **“life”** (Genesis 1:11f.) John draws a parallel to the original creation at which **“the Word”** was present and active. Almost without recognizing it, we are transported in time from the original creation (John 1:3) to the appearance of our Lord in human history at the incarnation (verses 4-5ff.). When the **“Word”** came into the world, the world was in a state of chaos, spiritually speaking. When the **“Word”** appeared, He was the **“light”** that illuminated the darkness, revealing the righteousness of God and exposing man's sin. This had the effect of separating the **“light”** from the **“darkness.”** The darkness observed the light, but did not **“master”** it (verse 5)

John introduces **“light”** as a theme that will recur throughout this Gospel (John 3:18-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36; 12:46). It is a prophetic theme, which is highlighted in Matthew (4:13-16; 5:14-16) and Luke (1:76-79; 2:25-32; 16:8) as well. Jesus came as the **“light,”** and He left His disciples and His church behind to reflect that **“light”** in His absence. The world's efforts to suppress the **“light”** have failed, and thus the light continues to shine, even till the present time, through the people of God.<sup>2</sup>

## 4. In relation to evil – preeminent over darkness (1:5)

**{5} The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.**

- a. Sin is introduced as darkness

## B. His manifestation to the World (1:6-13)

1. He was witnessed to by John (1:6-9)

**{6} There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. {7} He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. {8} He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. {9} The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.**

- a. John was only a reflection – a “morning star”
- b. Jesus was the true light – lighting every man

The Apostle John turns his attention to John the Baptist in verses 6-8. If I am correct in assuming that John the Apostle was the second disciple of John the Baptist who left him to follow Jesus (John 1:35-42), then it is little wonder that the author of this Gospel has something to say about John the Baptist. How interesting that the Apostle John does not refer to the Baptist here as “John the Baptist,” but simply as **“John.”** The emphasis of verses 6-8 is not on John as a “baptizer,” but on John as a **“witness.”** John came as a witness to the **“light,”** that

<sup>2</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, “What Child Is This?” ([http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page\\_id=2349](http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2349))

all men might put their trust in Him. He was not the light, but only a witness to the light. In his reference to John the Baptist, the Apostle John was careful to point out the Baptist's subordinate role, as was the Baptist himself (see verses 19ff.).

John the Baptist's task was to bear witness to the "light." His mission was the same as his disciple, John the Apostle: to focus his ministry on Christ, so that men might come to believe in Him for salvation. The "light" to which John had been bearing witness had not dawned as yet, nor had Jesus yet been identified as that "light." John could only speak of the "light" as One who was coming, One who was yet to be revealed.

John himself is not the light to which he bears witness. The light to which he bears witness is the *true* Light. He is the fulfillment of all that "light" foreshadowed. The "Word" is the source of light; He is the One who called light into existence (Genesis 1:3). After the creation account in Genesis, "light" becomes a prominent Old Testament theme. Consider some of the Old Testament "light" texts that foreshadow our Lord's coming:

When John tells us that Jesus is the "light," he is telling us that our Lord is the fulfillment of Israel's hopes, realized in Messiah, who was symbolized and characterized by light in the Old Testament. Jesus is the "true light," that is, the final consummation of that "light" foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The appearance of the "true Light" established a standard of righteousness which exposes the sins of those who walk in darkness.

The "true light" came into the world, but the world's response to that light was not what we would have hoped. The Word, who existed before the world was created, who brought the world into existence, who brought forth the light, came into the world which He made and yet the world did not know Him. The one who was both the Word and the Light came into the world He created, and this world did not want Him.

2. He was unrecognized by His own creation (1:10)

**{10} He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**

3. He was rejected by His own people (1:11)

**{11} He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

4. But He made those that believed sons of God (1:12-13)

**{12} Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— {13} children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.**

All three expressions, "of bloods," "will of the flesh," and "will of man" describe human origins from the standpoint of human initiative and human action. John seems to draw together all the expressions he can think of which his readers accept as the source of human conception and birth. Both in terms of the actual joining of cells, and in terms of the motivations and initiatives behind this union, *John tells us that our spiritual birth does not originate from, or through, human intent or endeavor. Rather, those who are born into the family of God as His children are those who are "born of God." God is the Creator; He is the ultimate cause, the One through whose will and work men become His children.*

- a. Not by human process
- b. Born of God – John's emphasis

- C. His manifestation to His own (1:14-18)

1. The Word became incarnate (1:14-15)

**{14} The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. {15} John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"**

These verses are the climax of all that John has been leading up to in his prologue. Up to this point, we have been told that "the Word" is a person who is eternal, who is in fact a member of the Godhead. He was there at creation; indeed, He was the Creator. He is distinct from, yet intimately in fellowship with, God the Father. He is the source of light and life. He is the One to whom John the Baptist bore witness, foretelling His appearance. He is the One whom His own people rejected, but those who receive Him become children of God. Those who do become God's children do so not out of human volition or effort; they are divinely "conceived." We have not yet been told who this person is. We are now told in verses 14-18.

Until now, the One John has been introducing to us has been identified only as "the Word." This "Word" is also the "Light"

which shines upon men. Illumination can occur from a great distance, as the light of the sun shines on us from afar. But John is now about to tell us an astounding fact: the "Word" became flesh and lived among men. Here is something absolutely unique to human history. In the pagan religions, the "gods" have come down to the earth in some form, but never was there an incarnation like that of our Lord. So too, in some false religions, men are promised that they will become gods, but never that God would take on humanity as John describes here

2. His revelation displayed God's grace and truth (1:16-18)

**{16} From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. {17} For the law was given through Moses;**

*grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. {18} No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.*

At the incarnation, God “**tabernacled**” among His people by means of His Son, and thus John can say, “**We saw his glory—the glory of the only [begotten] One, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father**” (John 1:14; see also 1 John 1:1-4).

John says, “**we saw his glory.**” The “**we**” must certainly be the apostles, although others may be included as well. The transfiguration of our Lord would be one of the more dramatic demonstrations of His glory (see Luke 9:30-32; 2 Peter 1:16-19). Another instance would be the turning of water into wine (John 2:11) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:4, 40). The greatest display of the glory of God in Christ up until now would be His death, burial, and resurrection (see John 12:28; 13:31; 17:5, 22, 24; 1 Corinthians 15:43). It may well be that John's use of the word “**glory**” should force us to reconsider and redefine “**glory**,” so that it encompasses things we do not normally associate with glory. As One who came forth “**from the Father**,” who was “**full of grace and truth**,” we would certainly expect Him to reveal God's glory.

This One John has been introducing is Jesus Christ. He is the One of whom John the Baptist bore witness. He is the One who is greater than all. He is greater than John the Baptist; He existed before him. He is greater than the law. He is “**full of grace and truth**” (verse 14). The law was a revelation of God, written in stone. The Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of God, manifest in human flesh, who tabernacled among men. He is the full and final revelation of God.

- a. Moses gave only a partial revelation – that of law & judgment
  - b. Grace and truth saw their full measure in Christ; His truth and judgment were accompanied by grace
3. He personally revealed the Father (1:18)
- a. He gave men His only true vision of the Person of God
  - b. He came to correct man's distorted picture of God

Jesus Christ is greater than the law because He is the full revelation of God (when the law only partially revealed Him). Furthermore, His grace is greater than the grace provided by the law: “For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another [literally grace upon grace]. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16, 17).

While there is a sense in which we can contrast “grace” and “law,” it is also true that the law was God's gracious gift to men. The law is not devoid of grace. Rather, through Jesus Christ and the New Covenant, God manifests greater grace. Thus, John can say that in Christ we have received “**grace upon grace**.” Moses was the instrument through whom “the grace of law” was given; Jesus Christ is the instrument through whom “**grace upon grace**” is given.

*In the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, the invisible God is now visible to men.* Moses longed to see God more fully and was granted a partial glimpse (Exodus 33:17—34:7). In Christ, we see God dwelling among men in human flesh. It is more than we could ever have hoped. It is more than we shall ever be able to grasp. It is a wonder that will inspire our worship throughout time and eternity.