

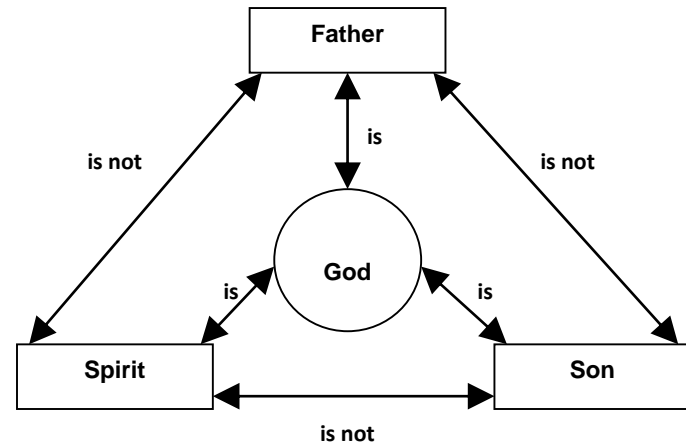
Reflections on John 1.1-2

by Will Groben

Day 1

Read John 1.1-18. You see that the Word [v.1] becomes flesh [v.14] as the baby Jesus [v.17]. So John is talking about the Son of God coming to earth to be born as a human, Jesus. But what does he mean by “Word”? and what does it mean that there is a Son of God? We will be exploring these ideas this week and next.

Read John 1.1-2 again. What important truths can you see in these verses? Take a moment to write them down. The Word is not the same as God, because he was with God. But John says that the Word existed back in the beginning and was with God back in the beginning. “The beginning,” is a literary reference to how the Old Testament starts, to how the history of God with creation starts. Read Genesis 1.1. So this Word is eternal, like God. Also, this Word, who was with God in the beginning and is eternal, is “fully God” [NET] or fully divine like God. This would have surprised John’s



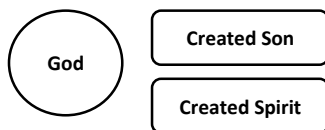
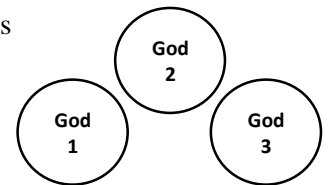
original readers. “Word” translates the Greek term “logos” [λόγος; pronounced LAH-gahs], which normally meant word, statement, or message. In Greek philosophical thought, the logos was the eternal reason running the universe, so they would be surprised to see John portray this “Word” as a personal entity. In Hebrew theology, the logos was God’s revelation, so they could accept that the “Word” was eternal, but they would be shocked to hear a fellow Jew like John say that the “Word” was God! They believed there was only one God. So do we, yet we agree with John, how can that be?

This picture depicts what God has revealed about himself: there is only one God, but within the “Godhead” there are three unique entities: the Father, the Son [called “the Word”

here] and the Holy Spirit; each in unity with, and of the same essence as, the others; yet each unique in personality and function. Each is all God, yet God is all three. John 1.1 says that the Word is fully God in essence, but is not the same as God the Father, because he was with God the Father [θεός, pronounced theh-AHS, meaning God] in the beginning. Take a few minutes to think about these truths. They are deep theological truths, and essential truths to our faith, so pray about them and reflect on them.

Day 2

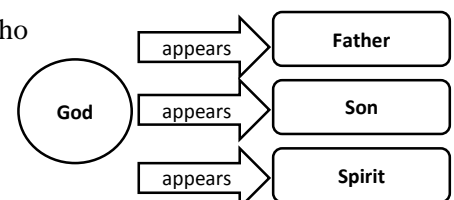
The graphic above from yesterday illustrates what we believe about God from the Bible. This is called Trinitarianism. This is different than tri-theism, which is the belief in three gods [see graphic to the right]. We believe in one God who has revealed himself miraculously as three individuals. Do you see the difference? God would not like for us to believe in three separate gods, he wants us to believe in himself, as revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



What we believe also is not the same as Arianism, which is the belief that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are distinct from God the Father, but are created beings, not divine like God [see graphic to the left]. This is what some cults like the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe today; it is a heresy as old as the church. A heresy is a false belief that is so serious, it means you are

not even a Christian. There are very few false beliefs which are that serious, but the whole church gathered together and declared this belief to be heresy back in the early fourth century.

What we believe also is not the same as modalism, which is the belief in one God who manifests himself in three ways [see graphic to the right]. Some people describe God as sometimes appearing in physical form [Jesus, the Son], sometimes in spirit form [the Holy Spirit] and sometimes as intellect [the Father, God of the Old Testament], but this is incorrect: the Father, Son, and Spirit are three individuals with distinct personalities and function, even though they are unified in essence and will. Thus it is wrong to say God is like ice, water, and steam, because this is one substance in three forms; it is wrong to say God is like a tree with roots, leaves, and bark, because these parts are not all of the tree, whereas the Spirit is all of



God, just as is the Son and the Father. Pray and reflect on these truths today. Try to get it straight in your mind what we believe about our triune God and what we do not believe.

Day 3

Read Matthew 28.18-20. When someone comes to saving faith, we baptize that person in water to baptize them into the community of the church, and to symbolize and memorialize what has happened inside that person. This is one of the two ordinances Jesus gave the church to perform, along with communion. When we baptize a new believer, we are to do so not just in the name of God, but in the name of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Read Exodus 20.1-6 and Exodus 34.12-14. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly demanded that the people worship and honor only him. So if the Son of God and the Holy Spirit were not part of the Trinity [or Triune Godhead], why would God let Jesus command the church to worship and honor both the Son and the Spirit instead of just himself?

Read Matthew 3.16-17. Can you see that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three individuals, not one godly entity appearing in three forms? Read John 14.16-17. Who is asking? To whom is he putting his request? Whom is he requesting will come? Can you see how these verses support what you learned in days one and two?

Read 2 Corinthians 13.14. Paul attributes unique provisions from each member of the triune Godhead: grace from Christ the Son, love from God the Father, and fellowship from the Spirit. We see here an example of the unique function of each, though they are so in unity that they are one God. Reflect on these gifts of grace, love, and fellowship with God; pray to be experientially aware of them each day.

Pray and ask God to encourage you in your faith. Nonbelievers assert that a Trinitarian or Triune God makes no sense. And they make a good point! In our finite and rational world, it makes no sense, but God transcends our world. God is infinite, all powerful, present everywhere, knowing everything including what has not happened yet, and eternally existing: there is no way we could ever fully comprehend God. So it is not surprising that he has revealed something about himself that seems difficult for us to understand: three in one, one who is three. Ask God to help you accept this, even if you cannot fully understand it.

Day 4

Read John 10.25-33. The Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Jesus to death. When he asked them why, they said for blasphemy, for making himself out to be God. So they understood what Jesus was asserting: that he was divine like God the Father, that he was the Son of God. See their accusation of Jesus in John 19.4-7.

Hebrews 1.8 [NASB] says, “But of the Son He [God the Father] says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of his kingdom.’” The quotation is from Psalm 45.6, which teaches about the Messiah, so this verse points to the Son being both God and the Messiah. The following line, Psalm 45.7, refers to God anointing the Messiah, so in this psalm, and thus in Hebrews, we have a distinction between the Father and the Son, yet both are called God and the Son is identified as the Messiah.

Romans 10.9-13 [NASB] says, “... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” This last quotation is of Joel 2.32, and the word for “Lord” in the Hebrew is “Yahweh.” So Paul is equating Jesus with the true God, Yahweh in this passage. Reflect on the divinity of the Son today, and praise him along with God the Father.

Day 5

Read Acts 5.1-4. Do you see that Peter equates the Holy Spirit with God here? Acts 28.25-27 [NASB] begins, “And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, ‘The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers...’” Paul continued by quoting Isaiah 6.8-10; but Isaiah 6.8-10 says Isaiah spoke after hearing the voice of Adonai, the Lord [referring to God], so Paul is equating Adonai with the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 10.15-17 does a similar thing with reference to Jeremiah 31.31-34, equating the Holy Spirit to the true God Yahweh for inspiration. Reflect on the divinity of the Holy Spirit today, and praise him along with God the Father and Christ the Son.