November 29, 2020


Passage: John 1:1-5

Introduction: Each of the Gospels approach the account of Jesus’ birth a bit differently: the Gospel of Mark launches right into Jesus’ public ministry. The Gospel of Luke tells the Christmas stories from Mary’s perspective. The Gospel of Mathew looks at Jesus’ birth from a kingly perspective. The Gospel of John is quite unique. John begins in the depths of eternity past, before the creation of the universe, where Jesus existed as the eternal Word. John 1:1-18 is commonly referred to as the “prologue” of John because it introduces the themes that will be elaborated on in the rest of the book. Take time to read the entire passage aloud as a group, and then work through the following questions, which focus on verses 1-5.

1. In verse 1, John refers to Jesus as the “Word” (“logos” in Greek). To Greek readers familiar with philosophy, the logos was the underlying logic, reason, or rationality behind the universe. To the Hebrew reader, the logos was God’s word recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. God created all things by his word, and God revealed himself through his word which was spoken and written by the prophets. God’s word was his self-revelation. Based on this background information, what does John intend for us to understand about Jesus by calling him “the Word”?

2. Verses 1-2 state that the Word was “in the beginning.” Compare this phrase with what we read in Genesis 1:1. What does it reveal about the nature of Jesus when we read that he already existed “in the beginning”? Is it important to realize that Jesus was never created? Why or why not?

3. In verses 1-2, John makes a couple of complementary statements. On the one hand, “the Word was with God” (the Word and God are two distinguishable persons). On the other hand, “the Word was God” (the very essence of God belonged fully and completely to the Word). How does John’s language support the classic theological doctrines of the Trinity (there is one God who exists in three persons) and the Hypostatic Union (Jesus is both fully God and fully man, two natures but one person)? Have you ever encountered someone who claimed that Jesus was not fully God? How might you use John 1:1-2 to explain the nature of Christ to someone you were witnessing to?

4. Verse 3 states that Jesus is the agent of creation. Compare this verse with Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:1-2. How would our view of Jesus be enhanced if we understood him to be not only our savior, but also our creator? Do you tend to think of Jesus’ power and artistry when you look out at the created world? Why or why not?

5. Verse 4 claims that “life” is found in Jesus. How does Jesus relate to our physical life? (see Col. 1:17) How does Jesus relate to spiritual life? (see also John 11:25 and 14:6)

6. Verses 4-5 claim that Jesus shines light into our dark world and our dark hearts. In other words, Jesus illuminates everything. C. S. Lewis once put it this way: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun
has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else.” How does knowing Jesus help us better understand all reality and the meaning of life?

7. Verse 5 is intentionally ambiguous. The word “overcome” can also be translated “understood.” So, on the one hand, the darkness has not “understood” Jesus, the light. In fact, he was rejected all the way to the cross. On the other hand, the darkness has not “overcome” Jesus! His cross was a surprising victory: he was reconciling sinners to God and securing eternal life for all who believe! When did Jesus first shine his light into your dark heart? How have you seen Jesus continually conquering darkness in your life?

8. John 1:1-5 presents a “big Jesus”: he is the self-revelation of God, he is eternally existent, he is fully divine, he is the creator of all things, he is the giver of life, he is the illuminator of all reality, and he overcomes all darkness. How does this picture of Jesus challenge our “small thoughts” of him?