

## Metaphors of Christ #2: Christ as the Word of God, and the Life

Last time we introduced the Bible's use of both literal and figurative names or titles of Christ, especially in the writings of John. Then we considered the meaning and ways we use the phrase "the word of God".

"Word" means different things, by context. A computer word is just an ordered series of bits. A grammatical word is a single word as is found in a dictionary. In common use though, it can also mean a short communication ("Hey, when you get a minute I would like a word with you."), or something much longer, like a sermon, teaching, exhortation, admonishment, message, etc. When used of Christ it means even more than this.

### So this brings us to the question, what does John mean when he refers to Christ as "the Word of God"?

Jn. 1:1-4 – "In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Jn. 1:14 – "And the **Word** was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

1 Jn. 1:1 – "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of **the Word of life**;"

1 Jn. 5:7 – "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the **Word**, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. "

Rev. 19:11-13 (at Jesus' second coming - heaven opened, white horse, rider is called Faithful and True) . . . And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called **The Word of God**. "

### What can we get from these verses?

1. "The Word" is really the Son, the second "person" of the Godhead.
2. He was not only with God (the Father), but is in fact God.
3. He was "from the beginning" – i.e., not a created being
4. He is the Creator of all.
5. He is not some impersonal principle or "force of the Cosmos", but is a personal being (a "he", not an "it").
6. He was made flesh (became a man), and was physically observable.
7. He is the complete embodiment of truth,
8. and of grace.
9. In the end, he will be seen not to be just grace and truth, but also vengeance, holy wrath, and final judgment against the enemies of God.

As a review of last time, we saw how the Bible uses the phrases "word of God", "word of the Lord", "the Word", etc.

1. Sometimes a message from God to an individual, like in a dream
2. A message from God directly to a prophet, via audible voice, vision, dream, etc.
3. The written scriptures
4. Specifically the NT gospel and the teachings of Jesus

So by the "word of God" we mean any and all of the ways God uses to reveal to human beings His existence, His nature, His will, His commandments, His direction and guidance, His wisdom . . . that Jesus Christ is a personal revelation of Truth.

In John 1, he shows how all of God's self-revelation is actually in the person of Jesus Christ – that he was not a mere man, but God himself, by whom the worlds were created. He is the perfect embodiment of the Godhead. (Col. 2:9) He is, and always has been the means by which the Father reveals Himself to man.

Heathen philosophers in the centuries BC even used the word "Logos" to describe the governing reason or design or wisdom of the universe, as some divine mind or spiritual principle. It seems pretty foggy to me, but is like a BC version of what lately has been called "Intelligent Design". They saw that for man to have conscience, intelligence, rationality, and a moral nature implies a Designer and Creator that is the same but on a more perfect level. We can also add the fact that we see evidences of design in all of creation – that all this couldn't have "just happened". In theology, this is part of what is called "general revelation", and the "teleological" argument for the existence of God (that design implies a designer).

However, even if this seems somewhat compatible with Jesus as the Word of God, I do not believe that John was expanding on some heathen concept of the Logos, nor even that he was much aware of it. He may not have known or even cared what

Plato, Zeno, or Philo thought about the “Logos”. Instead, he was getting it directly from God, and expanding on the OT uses of the “word of the Lord”.

John uses two other words to describe God’s self-revelation – **life** and **light**. These are literal descriptions, not metaphors, but help us to know what is meant by Christ as the Word of God. The Bible sometimes uses the phrase “word of life”.

1 Jn. 1:1-2, 5, 7 – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) . . . This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. . . . But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

### **Life - All life is “in Him” (without the life of Christ, there could be no other life)**

Jn. 1:4 – “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

Jn. 11:25-26 – “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Jn. 14:6 – “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

### **Different Kinds, or Levels of Life**

#### **1. Physical life**

- a. Elemental “life” – This is the basest form of life, consisting of atomic particles and movements. We don’t think of a rock or dirt as being alive, but at the atomic level it is very active with electrons zipping around from atom to atom and forming the basis for molecular and ionic bonds, crystalline structures, etc. Inanimate objects are inert – they can only be acted upon by outside forces like fire, freezing and thawing, gravity, pressure, bullets, etc.
- b. Plant life – besides elemental life, plants can respond to their environment and carry on chemical activities like photosynthesis, sending roots down for water, turning towards light, flowers opening/closing with day and night, curling leaves in dry weather, etc. They can reproduce, grow, and die.
- c. Animal life – animals have even more complex chemistry, systems, and abilities. Respiration, digestion, circulation, mental activity. They have mobility, hearing and sight, instincts, and hunger. They can feel pain and have a will to act and an ability to remember and learn
- d. Human life – the next step is rationality, ability for abstract thought, a moral sense, greater intelligence, increased dexterity for using tools, creativity, inventiveness, etc.

#### **2. Spiritual life** – This is the great divide for man. Apart from Christ, men are physically alive but spiritually dead.

- a. Regenerated human life – When a man is born again, he becomes spiritually alive – the life of Christ so enters into him and enlivens him that he is truly a new creature. Same body, but now eternally alive. This new man is capable of hearing, knowing, loving, obeying, and communing with God. This life does not end at death but will continue forever in the worship and enjoyment of God.
- b. Life of angelic and demonic beings – we don’t know and do not need to know much about these, but to know that they exist, they are greater in many capabilities than us, and that they are arrayed either in obedience to, or rebellion against, God. It would not be surprising to me if there were even more different types of spiritual life than we have seen in this physical world, as angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim, etc. We know as much as God has chosen to reveal, but seeking to go beyond that is an evil and dangerous curiosity.
- c. God Himself – When we say Christ is life, we mean much more than that he is alive. He is the source of life. He created all, upholds all things by the word of his power, and by him all things consist. Apart from his life and upholding power proceeding forth, the creation would cease to exist.

Ac. 17:24-25 – “. . . Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needeth any thing, seeing **he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;**”

Col. 1:16-17 – “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and **by him all things consist.**” That is to say, by him all things are **held together**. I believe that He is what holds all those protons and neutrons together in the nucleus of an atom when they would naturally be repelled by each other.

Heb. 1:3 – “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power,** . . .”