

GOD THE SON

Text: John 1:1

Readings: Col 1:15-23; John 1:1-14

Belgic Confession Art 10

Theme: The full divinity of Jesus Christ, the eternal God.

Purpose: To show that Jesus is the eternal Son of God to prompt a response of praise to him.

Introductions to books are very important. Some people read the first few paragraphs or the first few pages of a book and if it doesn't grab them they give up reading. A good introduction will get your attention and make you want to keep reading so you can find out more.

The apostle John wrote his gospel after the other three gospel writers. Those three are called the *synoptic* gospels, meaning that they wrote from the same point of view. John's gospel is different in structure and content from the others.

It also *begins* in a different way.

Matthew, writing for Jews, began with a genealogy; he knew that the Jews would be very interested in the family background of Jesus Christ.

Mark, who wrote the shortest gospel, began immediately with the ministry of John the Baptist and gets us straight into the story.

Luke, who wrote the longest gospel, began with a full and interesting account of the birth of the Lord Jesus.

John begins with an extended introduction that describes who Jesus is and why he came. He begins with a profound and powerful statement about Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. He refers to him as "the Word".

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This verse is one of the great foundation stones of our belief about Jesus. John wrote three phrases, each of which makes a distinct and important statement about the Son of God: he is eternal, he is a person and he is God.

1. HE IS ETERNAL

In his introduction John takes us back to the very beginning of the Bible, to the opening verse of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

John wants us to know that "In the beginning was the Word." The Word was there at the beginning and even before the beginning. He was there before anything was made or created. Before anything else existed the Word, the Son of God, was there.

He existed as the second person of the trinity. He was and is the eternal Son of God.

He had no origin or cause; rather he was the origin and cause of everything else.

He had no beginning; rather all things have their beginning in him.

He was not created; rather he was the one who created all things; verse 3, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

We find it hard to think of God as having always been there – that he was there before the creation of the angels, before the fall of Satan, before the creation of the world – yet this is what the Bible teaches us about the triune God, that he is eternal, he has always existed.

We know this from **the Scriptures**.

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, "And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the creation of the world."

In the closing chapter of the Bible Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev 22:13).

The writer of Hebrews compared Jesus to the OT figure Melchizedek who was “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life”; he wants us to see that Jesus is much greater than this earthly priest and king (Heb 7:3). Jesus too was “without beginning of days or end of life.”

The creeds and confessions of the Christian church express this truth.

The Nicene Creed tells us that the Son of God was “begotten of the Father before all worlds... begotten, not made...”

The Athanasian Creed tells us that “The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.”

That is, he is eternal and he has always been in this relationship of being the Son of his Father from all eternity. The Son of God is eternal.

2. HE IS A PERSON

John wrote; “...and the Word was with God.” There are two truths expressed in this short phrase.

a. the first is that Jesus is a person **distinct from the Father.**

John distinguishes two persons here; God the Father and God the Son. We know from the rest of the Bible that there is also a third person in the trinity, God the Holy Spirit. These are the three persons in the trinity. But John here is focused on “the Word”, the Son of God.

“The Word was with God”. He was there with God the Father before creation. He was distinct from God, another person, but he was not separate from God or isolated from him or at a distance from him because these two persons, with the Holy Spirit, were and are *one God*, each sharing the divine essence or substance.

It is impossible to consider the full divinity of Jesus without considering the trinity. We believe from the Scriptures that there is one God in three persons.

This is and always will be a mystery to us, beyond our understanding. JC Ryle wrote, “There is much in these verses which is above our reason.... There is much that we cannot explain and must be content to humbly believe.” But we do know that “the Word was with God”, that Jesus is God and that he is a person distinct from the Father.

b. The second truth we learn from this phrase is that Jesus is a person **in fellowship with the Father.**

John wrote, “and the Word was *with* God.” He used a little Greek word (*pros*) that means *towards*. The Word was towards God, or “face to face” with him. They lived together in a very close relationship, in fellowship with each other.

This too is the mystery of the trinity, the mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit being in such a close and intimate relationship with each other so that they know each other through and through. They are constantly sharing each other’s company in a perfect and unbroken union. They are united together in knowledge, love, purpose and direction. During his ministry on earth Jesus often spoke about his fellowship and union with his Father.

Jesus is eternal and he is a distinct person who is in the most intimate and close fellowship with God the Father.

3. HE IS GOD

John wrote, "...and the Word was God." This has been a hotly debated phrase in the history of the church. Not everyone accepts that Jesus is fully and eternally God.

The Jews in Jesus day did not accept his claim to be God and regarded this as the greatest blasphemy and put him to death for his claim.

In the early 4th century AD a man named Arius began to teach that Jesus was not fully God nor was he eternal. Arius taught that Jesus was the first creature God had made and that he was inferior to the Father and subordinate to him.

The ideas of Arius took a firm hold on people's minds and for a while it seemed as though they would win over the whole church.

The early church struggled with this heresy and debated this doctrine back and forth. One of the leading theologians of the church who argued against Arius and for the biblical teaching on Jesus was a man named Athanasius. The Athanasian Creed was named after him.

After a long and fierce debate the church eventually agreed that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, fully and eternally divine, sharing the same essence or substance as God the Father.

This truth was clearly stated by the Council of Nicea which met in 325AD. The Nicene Creed was based on what this council decided. We declare this when we say, "I believe ...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father....."

It is just as important for us to remember and believe this truth as it was for Christians 1700 years ago. The Jehovah Witnesses today have the same view as Arius. They will say that Jesus is "a god" but they do not agree that he is the eternal Son of God and they don't accept that he is equal to God the Father.

But the Bible teaches us that Jesus is fully God with the same divine essence as God the Father. The Athanasian Creed says that "the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal." Jesus has all the divine attributes or characteristics of God the Father. He is a distinct person but all that the Father has the Son has; "Such as the Father is, such is the Son" (Athanasian Creed).

John introduces his gospel with these fundamental truths about Jesus because they are the foundation of everything else that he wrote. He wanted those reading this book to get interested in his account of the life of Jesus and to keep reading.

He wrote all this down "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

This was his purpose in writing: that you may believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, that he is the second person of the trinity who was with the Father from the very beginning, and that he is fully God, "and that by believing you may have life in his name".

We will close with **two applications** from this.

1. In verse 18 of this chapter he wrote; "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, **has made him known.**"

God is a spirit and no one has seen him or can see him. But Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world to make him known, to teach us about him, to explain to us all we need to know about God the Father.

We will never know all there is to know about God the Father. He is God and he is incomprehensible. If we could know him fully then we too would be gods, but that is not so.

Nor can we know all there is to know about the Son of God. He too is fully divine, he too is God. We know a great deal about him from the Bible, especially from the New Testament, but we can never know everything about him.

We can know him truly but not exhaustively.

There will always be more to learn about him, more to experience of his love and grace and mercy, more to appreciate about him. Lord willing, we will be doing this all our lives on this earth and for all eternity, exploring the height and depth, length and breadth of his love for us. Jesus has come to make God known.

2. We know from the Bible that Jesus left heaven and came into this world as a man. He took on our flesh. We call this his **incarnation**; he came *in carnis*, which is Latin for *in the flesh*.

This is a familiar truth and so we often pass over it without thinking about it carefully.

This Jesus, fully divine, all powerful, the Lord of the world, left the glory of heaven to come down into this world of sin!

This Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who made the world, came down to this earth to save us from the punishment we deserve because of our sin.

“From heav’n you came, helpless babe,
Entered our world, your glory veiled,
Not to be served, but to serve,
And give your life that we might live!”
(*The Servant King* – Graham Kendrick)

While he was here he was ignored, misunderstood, rejected and abused. He was arrested, falsely accused, beaten, spat on, flogged and then crucified.

But he was the Son of God! He was God himself! He was perfect, without sin, holy and pure!

The great hymn writer, Charles Wesley, asked,
“Amazing Love! How can it be that thou my God shouldst die for me?
He left his Father’s throne above,
So free, so infinite his grace,
Humbled himself – so great his love-
And bled for Adam’s helpless race!
Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me!” (SttL 277)

So we respond in praise and thanks to the eternal Son of God:

“Beautiful Saviour, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man;
Glory and honour, praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be thine.”

Amen