

The Harmony of the Gospels

Part 2 – The Pre-existent state of Christ and His Incarnation

(John 1:1-18; Luke 1:1-4 ; 3:23- 38; Mathew 1:1-17)

The four Gospels are a beautiful testimony of God's revelation to man. Imagine a tax collector (Matthew), an untrained Jewish young man with a history as a quitter (Mark), a greek doctor (Luke), and a Jewish fisherman (John) all writing harmonious testimonies about the events in the life of Jesus. There is no way, without the intervention of God, that they could have written these amazingly accurate accounts (2 Timothy 3:16). The historical references, the prophetic references, and the personal details all work together to compose one very detailed, very accurate picture of Jesus—the Messiah, the King, the Servant/ Son of man and the Son of God.

Systematically we would go to Mathew chapter 1 but we are going to study in a chronological manner. All four Gospels begin by placing Jesus within a historical setting, but the Gospel of John is unique in the way it opens.

The Book of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus that connects Him to David and Abraham.

Mark starts with the preaching of John the Baptist, him preparing the way for Jesus (fore runner of Jesus, son of Zechariah & Elizabeth, not Apostle John) .

Luke has a dedication of his work to Theophilus and follows that with a prediction of the birth of John the Baptist.

But John begins with a theological intro. It is almost as if John had said, "I want you to consider the gospels. But you will not understand the real good news of Jesus in its fullest sense unless you view Him from this point of view. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. He was God from the beginning of time. John is introducing us to the person of Jesus, deity of Jesus.

John is taking us even further than the introduction of Mathew, Mark & Luke; even further than the genealogies. Even further beyond Genesis 1:1. He is deliberately connecting us to a time in eternity. Back to a time when there was nothing when there was only God even before creation. Beginning of the beginning.

Theme of Gospel of John : Christ is portrayed as the Son of God, attesting the deity of Christ. Represented by Eagle, blue colour (heavenly) (*Refer Part 1 notes for details*)

The pre-existent state of Christ and His incarnation:

	When & where	Mathew	Mark	Luke	John
Part 1 – Introduction					
Part 2 – The Pre-existent state of Christ and His incarnation					
The dedication to Luke’s gospel				1:1-4	1:1-18
Christ’s pre incarnate existence		1:1-17			
The genealogies of Jesus				3:23b – 38	

About the author of Gospel of John:

- Written by Jesus’ beloved disciple John/ Apostle John/ One of the 12 apostles or disciples
- listed as the youngest apostle; the Church Fathers identify him as John the Evangelist, John of Patmos, John the Elder, and the Beloved Disciple, and testify that he outlived the remaining apostles.
- Direct eyewitness
- Also wrote 1st, 2nd & 3rd John, Revelation (total 5 books contributed to New Testament)
- Jesus often took Peter, James, and John aside defining them as an inner circle of disciples (13:23-24; 20:2-10; 21:2, 7, 20).
- At the time of crucifixion, Jesus selected John, his beloved disciple and handed the responsibility of taking care of Mary, His mother.
- Family: He was the son of Zebedee and Salome. Apostle James was his older brother (who also one of 12 disciples/ apostles).
- Calling: accompanied by their father Zebedee, were preparing their nets in a boat when Jesus called them. Both James and John left the boat (their profession as fishermen) and their father (dear ones) to follow Jesus (Matt 4:18-22).

Mark 1:20 says “He called them at once and they also followed him leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with hired men “. *Not many fishermen with hired staffs under them those days. They probably owned a fishing business in Galilee.*

- Jesus referred to the pair (John & James) as "Boanerges" (translated "sons of thunder"). A Gospel story relates how the brothers wanted to call down heavenly fire on an inhospitable Samaritan town, but Jesus rebuked them (Luke 9:54)

John 1: 1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

One of the most theologically in-depth passages in all Scripture is John 1:1. This verse is a Christian gem. Stunning to see how much truth is embedded in such few words. Jehovah witness group would always misquote this verse.

As far back as man can think, in the beginning ... the Word was existing. We see 'the Word' used 3 times in the first verse. The term "Word" is the common Greek word logos, which meant "speaking, a message, or words." Hebrew is 'Dabar'.

It serves as a title referring to Jesus. The Logos is God's self-unveiling to humankind in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the exact prototype, the exact representation of the nature of God.

Used only here. No other Gospel employs the term, but in ***1 John 1:1 we find "the Word of life"*** in this sense and in ***Rev. 19:13 we have: "and his name is called the Word of God."***

Why didn't John simplify to say 'In the beginning was Jesus Christ'?

"Logos" was widely used in Greek philosophical teaching as well as in Jewish wisdom literature and philosophy. In using the term "Word" (logos), John was using a term familiar to both Jews and Greeks, though each attributed a different meaning to the term.

For the Greek mind the "Word" referred to the rational principle that supervised or governed the universe. Some non personal power source, non personal energy, entity; non personal force floating in the universe, non personal wisdom governing.

To the Jew, "Word" was a reference to God. The phrase 'the word of the Lord' appeared so many times in the OT. The word of the Lord was simply the revelation of God that is spoken. Word of the Lord came to so & so .. prophets – Expression of God's will through revelation; expression of God to people.

- To the Jew ‘a word’ was far more than a mere sound; it was something which had an independent existence and which actually did things. The spoken word to the Hebrew was fearfully alive. That’s why Hebrew speech has fewer than 10,000; Greek speech has 200,000. To the eastern people a word is not merely a sound; it is power which does things.
- Once Isaac had been deceived into blessing Jacob instead of Esau, nothing he could do could take that word of blessing back again (Genesis 27). The word had gone out and had begun to act and nothing could stop it.

In particular, we see the word of God in action in the Creation story. At every stage of it we read: **“And God said ... ”** (Genesis 1:3, 6, 11). The word of God is the creating power. Again and again we get this idea of the creative, acting, dynamic word of God. **“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made” (Psalm 33:6). “He sent forth his word and healed them” (Psalm 107:20). “He sent forth his commands to the earth; his word runs swiftly” (Psalm 147:15). “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). “Is not my word like fire, and, says the Lord, like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)**

The fact remains that the ‘word of God’ (Logos) became one of the commonest forms of Jewish expression. It was a phrase which any devout Jew would recognize because he heard it so often in the synagogue when scripture was read.

John chose this term because it was familiar to his readers. He comes along and says let me introduce you to a real person, the logos is not an impersonal force / power, but the logos is a person. Not an impersonal reality/ concept but a personal God. John wanted it known that Jesus Christ was fully God in human form.

God fully expressed through Jesus. The greatest expression of God is through His Son Jesus. **Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power...**

Let’s look at the scripture again carefully:

John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

Was (1510) (ēn which is the imperfect form of eimi) means ‘to be’ and is the usual verb for existence. Used 4 times in John 1:1-2

In John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word,” means it had been there before or existed before the beginning of anything, even before space, time & mass ; Notice John does not say in the beginning CAME the Word or BEGAN the Word, but WAS the Word.

This verb is in the imperfect tense which speak of continuous action, continuous existence. In a word, the Word was continually existing! The Word, the eternal logos, Jesus Christ, was already in the beginning before the beginning became a beginning. Before time began, the Word was already existing—eternally existing. He was there before all of creation was here.

John is a master at using the Greek verbs and tenses and four times in Jn 1:1-2 he uses the imperfect tense (ēn) of the verb eimi to say the Word was God (continually already existing before the beginning of time), but in ***Jn 1:14- And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us***; note he uses the verb ginomai in the aorist tense (an instantaneous intervention, decisive, at a moment or point in time) He became Man.

So Jesus who always was God, became Man in a moment in time, doing so without ceasing to be God! Amazing truth! **John never says Christ ‘became’ God (no one appointed him, no one elected Him, no one created Him, not a created being) but that He was (always) God! But He became a man when He took on flesh and dwelt among us.** That is the meaning of “incarnation,” from the Latin incarnatus, which means made flesh. Fully God and fully man. The time when infinite becomes finite, eternal one enters time, invisible one becomes visible.

Three things that demonstrate the deity of Christ:

1. Pre existence with God (In the beginning was the Word, shows us the continual existence; He stood outside of time. Jesus is not the created being but creator even before foundations of the earth was laid. He has no beginning & no end , exists from eternity to eternity. There was never a time He didn’t exist.)

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

God lived in eternity, and created time. He transcends time, clocks and calendars. He encapsulates time and everything connected to it.

2. His co-existence with God (***The Word was with God*** & in verse 2 ***He was in the beginning with God***) – emphasis . Not only existed as the eternal God but existed eternally with God. He is distinct from the eternal God. The Trinity – God in three persons. Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit participated in creation.
3. Self existence : The Word was God Himself.

John 1: 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Colossians 1: 15 He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(Believe that God holds all things together. God is in it)

John 1: 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Life is man's most important asset. Man's spiritual and physical life come from Him. Jesus, the Source of "life", is also the light of men. Light's nature is to shine and dispel darkness. Darkness is almost personified in this verse: darkness is unable to overpower light.

John 1: 6-18 here was a man sent from God, whose name was John (John the Baptist-forerunner of Christ, the messenger, the voice of one calling in the desert). ⁷ ***He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.*** ⁸ ***He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.***

⁹ ***The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*** ¹⁰ ***He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*** ¹¹ ***He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*** ¹² ***But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*** ¹³ ***who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.***

¹⁴ ***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** ¹⁵ ***(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he***

was before me.”) ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

1: 8 : testify / bear witness - The verb ***martureo*** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give a testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. The words testified relate to fact, not opinion, even as they would in a courtroom setting.

1:16. Fulness (*pleroma* from *pleroo* = make full, fill, fill up) means fullness, full measure, abundance, completion, or what fills. Pleroma describes a full measure or abundance with emphasis upon completeness. Pleroma is completion and describes what is fulfilled or is completed without any gap.

The Word made flesh is the source of grace (charin), which is the sum total of all the spiritual favors God gives to people. The words ‘we have all’ received ... all refer to Christians and includes John the author. Because of the fullness of His grace ... one blessing after another (charin anti charitos, lit., “grace in place of grace”) comes to Christians as waves continue to come to the shore. The Christian life is the constant reception of one evidence of God’s grace replacing another.

Luke 1: 1-4 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

There are 2 shout outs to Theophilus in Luke & Acts. Bible scholars think he must be a high ranking government official or someone who contributed to publishing of the gospel.

Genealogy of Jesus (as the Messiah, King) in Mathew & Luke (Perfect man, Son of man) :
Mathew 1: 1-18 & Luke 3:23-38

- Matthew is using the genealogy to show how Jesus is in the line of dynastic succession/royal lineage. He demonstrates the Abrahamic descent of Jesus as an heir of David.
Luke emphasizes that Jesus was the son of man through Adam.

Accordingly, Matthew's genealogy descends from Abraham to Jesus, while Luke's ascends from Jesus to Adam and God. (*This descent to Adam is likely related to Luke's desire to identify Jesus with salvation for all humanity - Son of man*)

- Matthew has 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus (14 generations from Abraham to David + 14 generations from David to Babylonian exile + 14 generations from Babylonian exile to Jesus); whereas Luke has a total of seventy-seven generations.

The name of David in Hebrew is “דָּוִד,” and from here you just do the math. The numerical value of the first and third letter “ד” (called dalet) is 4. The middle letter “ו” (called waw) has a numerical value of 6. Put it into your mental calculator: 4+6+4=14. The numerical value of the name of “David” is 14.

- According to Bible commentators, Matthew emphasizing the lineage through Joseph's side of the family, and Luke the lineage through Mary's side. Mary's (the actual biological line according to prophecy), and Joseph's (the legal line). Both are Jews.
- In Gospel of Mathew, Jesus' ancestry is traced through David's son King Solomon. In Luke's gospel, the family line is traced through David's son Nathan.
- Math 1:16 Jacob was the father of Joseph , Joseph the earthly adoptive father of Jesus . Luke 3:23 Heli was the father of Joseph.

1st explanation: Since there was no specific Greek word for “son-in-law,” Joseph was called the “son of Heli” by marriage to Mary, Heli's daughter. There is no record that Mary had any brothers to inherit her father's possessions and rights. Thus, Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary.

2nd explanation: A woman whose husband died without issue was bound by law to be married to her husband's brother, and the first-born son registered as the son of the deceased brother. Heli's widow might have been married to Jacob (husband's brother), producing Joseph.

- In the genealogy we see that each name has a story (from deceivers, liars, murderers, adulterers, prostitute, idol worshippers (Solomon))- God chose imperfect people to accomplish His perfect purposes.

Our family tree might have some bad characters (alcoholics, adulterers) – When Jesus steps in, He will turn situations around , however imperfect/ dysfunctional they are. He has come for the weak, the broken, the sick, the imperfect people.

Abraham: liar/coward ([Genesis 20:1-2, 11](#)), had a child outside of marriage ([Genesis 16:1-4](#))

Isaac: favored one child (Esau) over the other (Jacob)([Genesis 25:28](#))

Jacob: liar/deceiver ([Genesis 27:5-29](#)), also favored one child (Joseph) over the other children ([Genesis 37:3-4](#))

Judah: sold his brother (Joseph) into slavery ([Genesis 37:12-36](#)), slept with a woman (Tamar) whom he thought was a prostitute (but who happened to be his daughter-in-law)([Genesis 38:13-18](#))

Tamar: slept with her father-in-law (Judah) in order to have a son ([Genesis 38:13-16](#))

Rahab: pagan prostitute ([Joshua 2:1](#))

David: murderer and adulterer ([2 Samuel 11:2-15](#)), absentee Dad

Bathsheba: adulterer ([2 Samuel 11:1-5](#))

Solomon: married hundreds of women and had hundreds of mistresses, worshiped false gods ([1 Kings 11:1-4](#))

- Matthew could have highlighted Jesus' connection to Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel, the matriarchs of Israel. But instead, he mentions Canaanites, prostitutes, and Moabite women, who would be associated with Israel's sin and covenant failure. (This is in a time when genealogies didn't normally contain even a single female name. Women are often overlooked in Jewish genealogy). Jesus elevated the status of women and made them honorable. He continually showed the worth and dignity of women as persons. Jesus valued their fellowship, prayers, service, financial support, testimony and witness. He honored women, taught women, and ministered to women in thoughtful ways.