

The Logos, John 1:1-2 January 18, 2009 - Skip MacMillan

Last week we discussed Jesus Christ was “In the beginning”.

Elohim is the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth.

Jesus is the light of the world and the light in Genesis 1:3, see also 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Jesus is unique to all others. He is no religious leader; He alone is God.

This week we are looking at “The Word”.

Word/s

Words are interesting:

Delivered in: songs, poems, books, sermons, conversations, calls, websites, radio, TV, etc.
Stir emotions and thoughts: 9/11, Martin Luther King, Republican, Democrat, “I missed you”.

“**Word**” means “a speech sound or series of speech sounds that symbolizes and communicates a meaning usually without being divisible into smaller units capable of independent use” -Merriam and Webster.

Breath over vocal cords.

Invisible yet powerful: powerful enough to move the heart and change the world.

Power to cause revolutions, wars, or to be sued or to unite a people--“I have a dream”.

Power to deny Christ, like Peter.

Or with words: “ If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Originate from somewhere deep within, the heart and the mind.

Jesus said, “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks”.

God’s Word/s:

Created the universe.

When preached can cut to the heart, Acts 2.

When spoken in faith and belief in Jesus Christ, they can heal and defeat the enemy, Acts 3.

“The word of God is living and active . . . it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Logos in John

John says “in the beginning was the Word.”

“The Word” in Greek is “Logos”.

John is using *Logos* to identify Jesus Christ.

Logos means:

1. A general term for *speaking*.
2. Divine revelation: God’s full self-revelation through Jesus Christ *the Word*; also **message** (of God) (John 10:35); **commandment(s)** (Matthew 15:6); **gospel message** (Luke 5:1).

Why did John use this term, Logos (Word)?

1. John is able to speak to multiple cultures, i.e. Greeks and Jews.

- Both had long-standing concepts of *Logos*. So by using *Logos* he was able to speak into both cultures and he gained a larger audience to share the gospel.
- With this one word, *Logos*, John bridged two very separate worlds, Jew and Gentile. John was able to unite these two worlds in one word, *Logos*, who is Jesus Christ.

- Logos was an incredibly influential concept in both Greek and Hebrew cultures in understanding God's relationship to the world.

2. John was connecting to the new majority.

The church, in some estimates was 1 Jew for every 100,000 Gentiles (non-Jews).

The demographics of the church had changed, see Acts 15.

New Gentile believers did not have the heavy Jewish background of early Christians. So John shows them how God is beyond the boundaries of one culture and how God reaches into other cultures, history and the world.

John used *Logos* to: speak into two cultures, connect with the well-known concept of God and to address the new majority.

The Greeks' concept of Logos

The Greeks had a strong connection with *Logos*.

1. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, originated the idea of Logos in 600 to 560 BC

His "basic idea was that everything is in a state of flux. Everything was changing from day to day and from moment to moment. His famous illustration was that it was impossible to step twice into the same river. You step into a river; you step out; you step in again; but you do not step into the same river, for the water has flowed on and it is a different river. To Heraclitus, everything was like that, everything was in a constantly changing state of flux. . . .

"The answer for Heraclitus was: all this change and flux was not haphazard; it was controlled and ordered by following a continuous pattern all the time; and that which controlled the pattern was the Logos, the word, the reason of God. . . . The Logos was the principle of order under which the Universe continued to exist. . . . He held that nothing moved with aimless feet; in all life and in all the events of life there was a purpose, a plan and a design. And what was it that controlled events? Once again, the answer was Logos" -William Barclay.

The concept of *Logos* continued on in Greek thought in various forms and by various people, from 560 BC through the time of Christ via Greek philosophers, the Stoics and Philo (Hellenistic Judaism).

John wrote the Gospel in the same area as Heraclitus.

2. Concept

To the Greeks *Logos* meant "the spoken word (and) . . . the unspoken word, the word still in the mind -- the reason. When applied to the universe, Greeks were speaking to the rational principle that governs all things. The Greeks understood the world to be governed by the *Logos*, the mind of God. They understood that what gave humans the ability to think, reason and to know was the *Logos*, the mind of God" -Allaboutphilosophy.org.

Isaiah 49:6 - "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Hebrews concept of Logos

1. *Logos* means "word of God," reason, truth, knowledge, and wisdom.

"In Jewish thought a word was more than a sound expressing a meaning; a word actually did things. The word of God is not simply a sound; it is an effective cause. In the creation story God's word creates. God said, Let there be light, and there was light (Gen. 1:3). By the word

of the Lord the heavens were made . . . for he spoke and it was done (Ps. 33:6, 9). He sent his word and healed them (Ps. 107:20). . . .

(Isaiah 55:8-12)

Always we must remember that in Jewish thought God's word not only said things; it did things" -Barclay, "New Testament Words".

"The spoken word to the Hebrew was fearfully alive It was a unit of energy charged with power. It flies like a bullet. . ." -Barclay, quoting John Paterson.

2. Logos in the Old Testament was understood as the "Word of God".

"The Word of God' in the O.T. denotes God in action . . ." -FF Bruce.

- The Agent of creation (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6 ff; Prov. 8:22ff); building, doing, moving
- The Agent of revelation (Gen. 12:1, 15:1, 22:1; Prov. 8; Isa. 9:8; Jer. 1:4, 20; 8; Ez. 33:7; Amos 3:1, 8)
- The Agent of redemption (Ps. 107:20) -FF Bruce

Moses – *Logos* (word) manifested in the Law - Torah.

Prophets – *Logos*, spoke the "Word of the LORD".

Wisdom is *Logos*, personified in Proverbs 8.

3. "Memra" (Aramaic for "Word") - Rabbi's would use this word in place of "God"

Aramaic was the language used among Jews in the century prior to Christ. Targums are the Aramaic versions of the Old Testament, so the people could read the Bible.

Exodus 19:17 - "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God." They would write the same verse "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the 'word of God'."

Summary: *Logos* is active, effective cause, accomplishes all He desires, revelation and redeeming.

What we learn from this one powerful word "Logos" in John 1:1-2

1. God has a plan

In 560 BC Greece was a small culture but this small country would have a huge influence on the world, in the time of Christ and still does today.

The Greeks influenced political systems, education, language, arts and philosophy around the known world, in part due to the rise of Alexander the Great and their world domination.

This Greek civilization has been immensely influential on the language, politics (democracy), educational systems, culture, philosophy, art, use of written language and architecture of the modern world; it is accredited to being the foundational culture of Western Civilization.

This culture affects the way your living your life today: government, education, art, philosophies.

It was to this influential country, these people that God revealed Himself, 600 years prior to His arrival in the concept of *Logos*. Also to the Hebrews who were profoundly influential.

- God was preparing the world for His coming.
- Galatians 4:4 - "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

- When the time had fully come--common language (koine Greek), roads by the Romans, the pervasive philosophical concept of *Logos*, Jerusalem at the center of the world, commerce--the *Logos* entered into that world and took on flesh.

God has a plan and He is at work in the world.

God is sovereign, meaning all of reality falls under the supreme rule of God.

2. God reveals Himself to various people throughout history (unbelievers and Christians).

- a. God reveals Himself to the non-believing world **through** creation, order, patterns, beauty and so on. God is living and active in the lives of people throughout the world and history.
- b. God **revealed** Himself to the Greeks in the revelations of *Logos*.

John moved the concept of *Logos* from the impersonal "it" to the person of Jesus Christ; from a philosophical concept to the reality of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 49:6 - "I will also make you (Messiah) a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Luke 2: 29-32).

- c. God reveals himself to various people so they will **believe** in Him.

Isaiah 56:3-8

3. God is not a tribal God.

- a. John is saying that the *Logos* known to the Greeks is the Word of God to the Hebrews. He is the same God.

Greeks: John makes clear, "the Logos does not explain Jesus; Jesus explains and fills with new meaning Logos" -Akin.

The *Logos* predates the philosophical insights of Heraclitus, in fact He always was.

Israel: God had always intended for them to be a reflection of Him in the world.

- b. God is not and cannot be contained in one tribe or culture, not the Hebrew culture, not the American culture. He is the truth of all ages and for all the world. He is the eternal God, King of all kings, God of all nations, God redeems people from all continents, all languages, all cultures.

John 1:12-13 "to all who receive Him . . . "

Ephesians 2:11-22

Revelation 7:9-12

He cannot and will not be contained! God is not a tribal God.

4. God's Church (you) are to be a light to the Gentiles (unbelievers).

John is reaching out to the people of his day by using the powerful word, *Logos*.

Jesus is telling us to reach out; Matthew 5:14 - "You are the light of the world."

From Genesis to Revelation God is calling His church to be His light to those around us.

Speak to the people around you, listen, pray, love and point them to Jesus Christ, just as John was doing.

God is at work in their lives.

God wants His church to be the light of the world!

Three practical issues:

1. "What about the man on the island who never hears?" God can reveal himself to whomever.
2. Be cautious where you draw lines!
It is not the church's place to condemn a person or culture but to pray and be the light of Christ to them. We never know where the Spirit blows.
3. What if Israel had been a light to the Gentiles (i.e. Greeks), revealing the God of heaven and earth? How would Greece have responded? Would they have followed the Lord having already a concept of *Logos*?

Isaiah 26: 18 - "We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to the people of the world."

God spread His Word around the world through Israel's deportation.
God will get His message to the world one way or another.

Why talk about this stuff? How does this apply?

You have a terrible day at work, home or wherever.
You think through the various comebacks, words, possibilities, solutions, what you shoulda, woulda or coulda said.
You feel anxious and frustrated.
Then you step outside onto the back deck and look up.
What do you see? The night sky, with the moon and stars.
You keep looking and begin to see the details of the moon, the vastness of space.
As you are looking something is changing within you.
What was so significant, so frustrating, becomes less, to the point of insignificance.
You are being changed from within.
You are receiving a different perspective, realizing there is a bigger picture.
And the bigger picture is changing how you view and will handle the problem that drove you out there.
Learning about God, how he moves and works affects how you think about life and how you will go about your life.

We need a bigger picture in life to lift us up and out of the minutia of our day. That greater understanding is God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Logos awakens us to God's movement in the world and history, the bigger picture.
This learning inspires us to press on toward the LORD with greater intensity.

When your view of Jesus becomes more and more Biblical, you begin to understand and appreciate all the more the significance of His entering the world, His life, the power of the cross, resurrection and His ascension.

You understand Jesus is worth giving your life to, your worship, your service, for He is God.
You begin to understand the words of Jesus are worth your devotion, meditation and study.
And the truth that God does truly care for me hits all the deeper.

What are you going to do with Jesus now?

He is not some American God.
He is not some Hebrew God.
He is the God of all time and space.