

## 1. Preface of Saint John the Evangelist (John 1:1-18)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> This man came as a witness, to bear witness to the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup> He was not the Light, but *was sent* to bear witness to the Light. <sup>9</sup> This was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, but the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> However, all they who received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to them who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became 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.

<sup>15</sup> John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me was before me, for He existed before me.'"

<sup>16</sup> And from His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has described *Him*.

<sup>1</sup> **In the beginning was the Word:** The Word of God, of the Absolute Mind and Being, existed in the beginning. Before the creation of the entire universe, and before the beginning of time, the Word existed as a hypostatic and self-sufficient Being. As it states in Proverbs: "*I, the Wisdom, have dwelt with counsel and knowledge... I love those who love me, and they that seek me shall find me... He established me before time was in the beginning. Before He made the earth, even before He made the depths, before the fountains of water came forth, before the mountains were settled, and before all hills, He begets me... When He prepared the Heaven, I was present with Him...*" (Pr. 8:12–23). Thus, the infinite Word and Wisdom of God, Who created the world, existed pre-eternally with God. St. Basil the Great, in his treatise against Eunomios, interprets the first verse of the Gospel of St. John as follows: "The eternal existence, the impassible birth, the one essence with the Father, the grandeur of the nature, all these are described in only a few words. Then, he places the word 'was' next to the word

'beginning,' in order to silence the mouths of them who blaspheme and claim that there was a time when He did not exist." Theodoritos similarly explains: "The phrase 'In the beginning' is indicative of eternity. For He who was in the beginning clearly always existed." Additionally, Zygadinis interprets thus: "The phrase 'in the beginning was...,' in relation to that which follows, must be interpreted as 'always was..." The supposition that "beginning" refers to either i) the beginningless Father, or ii) the wisdom of God, is a theory neither supported by the meaning of the word nor the syntax of the verse.

**And the Word was with God:** After explaining that the Word existed eternally as a divine hypostasis, the Evangelist proceeds to reveal the inherent relationship between the Word and the co-eternal hypostasis of the absolute divine Mind, God the Father.

**The Word:** When preaching to the nations the appearance of the Son of God, St. John the Evangelist calls Him "the Word" in order to demonstrate His relationship with God the Father. As St. Gregory the Theologian clarifies: "He is connected with the Father, just as speech is with the mind." After His Ascension into heaven, the title "Word" was given to Jesus by the rest of the apostles as well as an affirmation of His divine character. This is evident in the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, where the Evangelist writes that he has ordered his narration of the events in the Holy Gospel, *"just as those, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered them to us"* (Lk. 1:2). In his first epistle (1 Jn. 1:2 & 5:7) St. John the Evangelist calls the Son of God the "Word," and in the book of Revelation (Rev. 19:13) he specifically refers to Him as "the Word of God." Since the Savior Jesus Christ was preached to the nations with this name, this is why St. John the Evangelist called the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, "Word" when he wrote his Holy Gospel. He chose to use this characteristic name because he intended to speak about His eternal hypostasis, His relationship with His beginningless Father, and His role as the Creator of all —and subsequently to prove that He Who was preached as the Son of God, the God-man Jesus Christ, is the pre-eternal Word of the pre-eternal God the Father; that all things were created through this Word; that He existed in the beginning, before all time; that He is the life and light Who illuminates every man coming into the world; that He is the One Whom humanity sought and desired; and that it is necessary for everyone who desires and seeks eternal life to believe in Him. The title "Word" was ascribed to the Savior Christ by divine inspiration, for it perfectly describes His eternal hypostasis and His relationship with the pre-eternal Mind, the Father, the first Person of the hypostatic, existential,

consubstantial, and indivisible Trinity, and if further denotes His relationship (as the Creator) with the creation; for, as the “Word of God” He revealed to us all that He heard from His Heavenly Father. Jesus Himself confirmed this when He stated: *"But He Who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him"* (Jn. 8:26). Furthermore, the Savior ascribes this title to Himself when He refers to Himself as “the Word of God”: *"And the Father Himself, Who sent me has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His Word abiding in you, because whom He sent, you do not believe"* (John 5:37-38). The title "Word" may also be ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ on account of His role as the herald Who announced the will of God and Who interpreted the heavenly mysteries to mankind. St. John the Evangelist, therefore, calls Jesus Christ "Word" because He indeed was the voice of the divine Mind, He was the ultimate Word Who announced to humanity the will of God, and He is the initial source and cause of all creation, the Word of God through Whom all things were made (Gen. 1:1-26).

**And the Word was God:** After the statements made in the first and second sentences, St. John the Evangelist proceeds to teach what the Word was: namely, that the Word was God, Who came forth from God, and he sets forth the unique characteristic of the Word’s hypostasis. The word “God” was written without the definite article “the” in order to demonstrate His consubstantiality with God the Father; that is to say, the Word—who always existed and who was always with God the Father—is God, like the Father. This reminds us of the Savior’s declaration: *"I and my Father are One"* (Jn. 10:30). Having distinguished the Word from the Father in the previous sentence, St. John the Evangelist now proclaims Him equal to the Father in Divinity and consubstantiality.

**<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God:** In the opening verse, the Evangelist described the Word as a being who is above creation, who exists before the creation, who is with God the Father, who is of divine essence and nature, and as perfect God. In this verse, he reiterates the introductory verse. "The common name, on the one hand, shows the consubstantiality; the phrase “was with God,” on the other hand, reveals the distinction of the Persons" (*Theodoret, Divine Dogmas, Vol. 5*).

**<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him:** Every visible and invisible creation was made through the Word. The term "through" denotes the direct source of creation. The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Colossians writes: *"For by Him all*

*things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16-17).* This Apostolic verse conveys the true meaning of the preposition "through;" namely, that the Word was the direct source and cause of the creation of the world—not merely an instrument through which the world was created.

**"And without Him nothing was made that was made."** With these words, the Evangelist specifically states that there is only one source of creation, he eliminates any and all other sources, and he expands on the meaning of "all things were made through Him." The Evangelist speaks theologically about the creation both of the world and of mankind by the Word of God Who humbled Himself in order to save mankind. He does this to reveal the Word's relationship, first, with the world which He created, and, second, with man in particular, and man's salvation which he now proceeds to speak about.

**4 In Him was life:** Everlasting and spiritual life existed within this Word, Who voluntarily out of His own goodness poured forth life in order to transmit life to rational creation. He thus gave life to mankind, as shown in the following verse.

**And the life was the light of men:** This eternal and life-creating Life is the noetic light of people, Who opens the noetic eyes of the soul so they may come to know the truth.

**5 And the light shines in the darkness:** The light of the noetic sun (i.e. the Word of God) that has appeared now enlightens them dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death (Mt. 4:16; Isa. 9:1-2).

**And the darkness did not comprehend it:** This refers to the allegorical, not the literal, meaning of darkness. These people dwelling in darkness did not accept Him or attain comprehension; because as the prophet Isaiah prophesied: *"The heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their ears have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them" (Isa. 6:10-12).* Thus, the darkness, that is the people sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, did not receive the light, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah. Hence, the word "comprehend" in this instance has the meaning of "attain" or "arrived." In other words, they who were sitting in darkness did not come to the Light, they did not receive it, they did not accept it; rather, they chose to remain sleeping in darkness.