

# Notes on the Greek New Testament

Weeks 205-230

The Gospel of John

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**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Week 205 – John 1:1-28**

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## **Day 1021 – Introduction to John's Gospel**

### **Stylistic Peculiarities**

The Greek style of John's Gospel is "highly individual" (Barrett) but also closely resembles that of 1, 2 and 3 John. It lacks the niceties and subtleties characteristic of classical Greek style but its language is as impressive as it is clear. John's vocabulary is fairly small, yet some of his frequently used words occur rarely in the other Gospels.

In analysing the peculiarities of John's style, Barrett highlights nine particular features:

1. John tends to link sentences together with *καί* rather than the more complex constructions that are common in Greek.
2. Sometimes John's sentences are not even linked by *καί* but are simply laid side by side.
3. John frequently uses *οὖν* as a connective, often simply as a narrative link rather than with any argumentative force. "This is an unmistakable feature of John's style."
4. John uses *ἐκεῖνος* substantively (in the singular), which is far (19 times) rarer in the rest of the New Testament.
5. John uses *ἐμός* rather than *μου*, and uses it with a repetition of the definite article.
6. The phrase *ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ἀπ' ἑμαυτοῦ* occurs 13 times in John but only 3 times (all plural) in the rest of the New Testament.
7. John uses *ἐκ* with the genitive in place of the partitive genitive.
8. John uses *ἵνα* (and *ὅτι*) frequently without expressing purpose.
9. John likes the construction *οὐ (μη) . . . ἀλλὰ*.

### **Influences shaping the Fourth Gospel**

The extent to which John's language and thought are influenced by Greek language and thought or by Aramaic is a hotly debated issue. Having considered the argument, Barrett draws the conclusion, "Perhaps it is safest to say that in language as in thought John treads, perhaps not unconsciously, the boundary between the Hellenic and the Semitic; he avoids the worst kind of Semitism, but retains precisely that slow and impressive feature of Aramaic which was calculated to produce the effect of solemn, religious Greek, and may perhaps have influenced already the liturgical language of the Church."

Beasley-Murray argues that the relationships between the Fourth Gospel and other contemporary religious movements are complex. Having reviewed a number of suggested influences he concludes, "The links traceable between the Gospel and diverse Hellenistic and Semitic traditions make it implausible to settle for any one of them to the exclusion of the rest... The breadth of the Evangelist's sympathies is demonstrable above all through his employment of the Logos concept in the

prologue... What he achieved in the prologue to the Gospel he did in the body of the Gospel; the bells he had set ringing in the minds of his readers in the first eighteen verses of his book continued to ring out the message with a multitude of associations that helped to commend and interpret the good news he sought to convey. If it has made the task of interpretation more difficult for modern readers, it will not have been so for its earliest readers. Few of them, doubtless, will have caught *all* the associations present in the text, any more than moderns do. This is the gospel that speaks accordingly as the hearers and readers can receive it. That applies equally to the ignorant and the learned who seek God through its pages."

### Authorship

In the early church there is almost universal attribution of the Fourth Gospel to the apostle John: "Certainly from the end of the second century on, there is virtual agreement in the church as to the authority, canonicity and authorship of the Gospel of John" (Carson). Many contemporary scholars question this attribution. Carson presents a detailed examination of the arguments and concludes that the author, who is referred to in the gospel as 'the beloved disciple,' is indeed John the son of Zebedee.

### Date and Provenance

Carson writes, "Almost any date between about AD 55 and AD 95 is possible. Even so, 21:23 'suggests it was probably nearer the end of that period than the beginning' (Michaels...). More by way of default than anything else, I tentatively hold to a date about AD 80." This date is also favoured by Beasley-Murray. Patristic evidence suggests John wrote the gospel from Ephesus. Carson thinks that there is no clear evidence to suggest a different provenance (though many have been suggested).

### Characteristics and Theology

John's gospel focuses almost entirely on Jesus' ministry in Judea in contrast with the Synoptics, which focus on his ministry in Galilee. Carson considers the two perspectives to be complementary rather than contradictory. He suggests that John's narrative sheds light on puzzling features of the Synoptic narratives such as Jesus being able to borrow a donkey for his entry into Jerusalem. Such features would be more easily understood if Jesus had visited Jerusalem on previous occasions.

John is concerned to demonstrate *who Jesus is*, to explain the *salvation* that he has come to give and to demonstrate that in him the *eschatological age* has dawned. (Beasley-Murray sums up the Fourth Gospel's theological emphases under the headings, *Christology*, *Soteriology* and *Eschatology*.) Jesus is the fulfilment of the entire sweep of the Old Testament, "He is the new temple, the one of whom Moses wrote, the true bread from heaven, the true Son, the genuine vine, the tabernacle, the serpent in the wilderness, the passover" (Carson). Jesus has brought in the eschaton, the age of fulfilment – the Spirit has been given and eternal life is available now.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Fourth Gospel is stated by the author in 20:30-31. Carson argues that the purpose of the work is evangelistic; it is intended particularly for Jews and Jewish proselytes to convince them that the Messiah they long for has come and is Jesus. Carson writes, "Part of his goal, then, in writing an evangelistic book for Jews and proselytes, is to make the notion of a crucified Messiah coherent. The *intrinsic* offence of the cross he cannot remove. What he can do, what he feels he must do, is to show that the cross was there from the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Jesus is early

announced as the Lamb of God, 1:29), and that the cross is at one and the same time nothing less than God's own plan, the evidence of the people's rejection of their Messiah, the means of returning Jesus to the Father's presence, the heart of God's inscrutable purposes to bring cleansing (Jn 13) and life to his people, the dawning of the promised eschatological age, God's astonishing plan to bring glory to himself by being glorified in his Messiah."

Both Carson and Beasley Murray suggest that John's gospel may have been organised from material preached by the Evangelist. Beasley-Murray concludes, "No doubt the synoptic Gospels reflect a like process, but the Fourth Gospel is supremely the preacher's gospel – every episode in the book shouts out to be preached – and it is so because it is the product of a highly effective preacher's proclamation of Christ in the Gospel." Carson includes in his introduction an excellent section on 'Preaching from the Fourth Gospel,' focussing particularly on the gospel as narrative and the need to pay attention to John's theme concerning the place of Jesus in the sweep of redemptive history.

### Structure

Beasley-Murray provides the following suggested outline structure:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| I. 1:1–18:      | THE PROLOGUE  |
| II. 1:19–12:50: | THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS  |
| A. 1:19–51:     | <i>Testimonies to Jesus</i><br>The Witness of John the Baptist and the Early Disciples.   |
| B. 2:1–4:42:    | <i>The Revelation of the New Order in Jesus</i><br>Two signs exhibiting the new order, the water into wine and the cleansing of the temple (chap. 2); the Nicodemus discourse answering to the former (chap. 3); the Samaritan discourse answering to the latter (chap. 4). |
| C. 4:43–5:47:   | <i>Jesus the Mediator of Life and Judgment</i><br>Two signs, the healing of the officer's son and the paralytic at Bethesda, with discourse elucidating their significance in relation to Jesus' eschatological task.   |
| D. 6:1–71:      | <i>Jesus the Bread of Life</i><br>Two signs, the feeding of the multitude and Jesus' walking on the water, with a discourse expounding their significance and revealing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Passover feast.   |
| E. 7:1–8:59:    | <i>Jesus the Water and Light of Life</i><br>Jesus as the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles; the conflict between the representatives of God and the world.  |
| F. 9:1–10:42:   | <i>Jesus the Light and Shepherd of Humankind</i><br>The sign of the healing of the man born blind, the discourse on the Good Shepherd, and Jesus as the fulfillment of the feast of the Dedication of the Temple.   |
| G. 11:1–54:     | <i>Jesus the Resurrection and the Life</i><br>The sign of the healing of Lazarus and the plot of the high priests against Jesus   |

- priests against Jesus.
- H. 11:55–12:50: *Jesus the King, Triumphant through Death*  
Two significant acts, the anointing of Jesus and his entry into Jerusalem, with a discourse on his glorification and epilogue to his ministry.
- III. 13:1–20:31: THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS
- A. 13:1–17:26: THE MINISTRY OF JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES IN THE UPPER ROOM
1. 13:1–30: *The Foot Washing*  
A sign of cleansing through the death of Jesus and example to be followed.
2. 13:31–14:31: *The Departure and the Return Of Jesus*
3. 15:1–17: *Jesus the True Vine*
4. 15:18–16:4a: *The Hatred of the World for the Church*
5. 16:4b–33: *The Joy That Overcomes Tribulation*
6. 17:1–26: *The Prayer of Consecration*
- B. 18:1–20:31: THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS
1. 18:1–11: *The Arrest of Jesus*
2. 18:12–27: *The Trial before the High Priest*
3. 18:28–19:16a: *The Trial before Pilate*
4. 19:16b–42: *The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus*
5. 20:1–31: *The Resurrection of Jesus*
- IV. 21:1–25: EPILOGUE: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND ITS CHIEF APOSTLES

### Referenced Works

- Barrett, CK *The Gospel According to John*, London, SPCK, 1967
- Beasley-Murray, GR *John, Word Bible Commentary, vol 36*, Word Books, 1987
- Carson, DA *The Gospel According to John*, Leicester, IVP (Apollos), 1991

**Day 1022: John 1:1-5****John 1:1-18 The Prologue**

The Prologue has a poetic character and scholars have debated its poetic form. Beasley-Murray concludes, "If from one point of view the prologue may be viewed as a poem provided with explanatory comments, from the literary viewpoint it is a closely knit composition, constructed with consummate artistry."

Carson comments, "The Prologue summarises how the 'Word' which was with God in the very beginning came into the sphere of time, history, tangibility – in other words, how the Son of God was sent into the world to become the Jesus of history so that the glory and grace of God might be uniquely and perfectly disclosed. The rest of the book is nothing other than an expansion of this theme."

Beasley-Murray similarly, quoting Thyen, writes that the Prologue is "a directive to the reader how the entire Gospel should be read and understood." It is like the overture to an opera.

Beasley-Murray suggests the following structure:

- vv 1-5 The Word and Creation
- vv 6-8 The Witness to the Word by John the Baptist
- vv 9-13 The Reactions to the Word in the World
- vv 14-18 The Confession of the Word by the Church

**Verse 1**

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ἀρχη, ης f **beginning, origin**

ἦν "The continuous tense is to be contrasted with the punctiliar ἐγενετο (vv 3,6,14). It indicates that by ἀρχη is meant not the first point in a temporal sequence, but that which lies beyond time." Barrett.

Carson suggests that it may be "possible that John is making an allusion to his colleague's work, saying in effect, 'Mark has told you about the *beginning* of Jesus' public ministry; I want to show you that the starting point of the gospel can be traced farther back than that, before the *beginning* of the entire universe'."

Beasley-Murray comments on the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, "The statement recalls the first word of the Hebrew Bible, b<sup>c</sup>resit, rendered in the LXX, as in the Gospel, ἐν ἀρχῇ. The association was the more evident to the Jews, since they referred to books of the Bible by their opening words, and so 'In the beginning' was the Jewish name for 'Genesis.' In that beginning God *spoke*, and the universe was created (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, etc). This representation was entirely comprehensible to Jews, since to them, as to other peoples throughout the ancient Orient, the Word, especially the Word of God, was not so much an expression of thought as a powerful *action*, a concept not native to Greeks. So we read in Ps 33:6: 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth'."

In the LXX there are two uses of the term which are relevant here: a creative and powerful word (Gen 1:3,6,9; Ps. 33:6), and a prophetic or revelatory word (Jer 1:4; Ezek 1:3; Am 3:1 etc.). In later Jewish thought the 'word' became personified in inter-testamental wisdom writings (see also Prov 8:22). Carson comments, "In short, God's 'Word' in the Old Testament is his powerful self-expression in creation, revelation and salvation, and the personification of the 'Word' makes it suitable for John to apply it as a title to God's ultimate self-disclosure, the person of his own Son. But if the expression would prove richest for Jewish readers, it would also resonate in the minds of some readers with entirely pagan backgrounds. In their case, however, they would soon discover that whatever they had understood the term to mean in the past, the author whose work they were then reading was forcing them into fresh thought (see on v. 14)." In the N.T. the Word of God is frequently the message of the Gospel (Lk 8:11; 2 Tim 2:9; Rev 1:9; 1 Jn 1:1). John represents the substance of the Gospel as being Christ himself.

πρὸς with the acc. usually means 'in the presence of', but cf. Prov 8:30 for a parallel usage with respect to Wisdom. John's sense here is that the λόγος was preexistent, creative and divine. Carson says that by this phrase John expresses the "peculiar intimacy between the Word and God: the Word is oriented *toward* God."

θεος ἦν ὁ λογος "θεος being without the article is predicative and describes the nature of the Word. The absence of the article indicates that the Word is God but is not the only being of whom this is true... John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God." Barrett.

**Verse 2**

οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

**Verse 3**

πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν

That the Logos was God's agent in the creation is now reasserted both positively and negatively.

ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

γίνομαι

χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from  
εἷς, μί, ἐν gen ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one, a,  
an, single

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γίνομαι

**MSS.** Should the words, ὃ γέγονεν be joined with what goes before or with what follows? The oldest mss (p66, p35\*,  $\aleph$  A, B) have no punctuation. All punctuation is in any case non-original and therefore amounts to evidence of interpretation.

The majority of the committee that compiled the UBS text followed the consensus of ante-Nicene writers in joining ὃ γέγονεν with what follows. Metzger, however, dissents from this view and takes the words with what precedes them. Both he and Barrett argue that this fits better with the context and the general style of John. Carson also concludes that "the arguments of Schnackenburg ... in favour of reading the words with the rest of v 3 seem persuasive."

**Verse 4**

ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων·

ζωή, ης f life

"Since the perfect tense of γέγονεν is naturally followed by a present, some authorities (notably  $\aleph$  D OL MSS), read ἐστὶν in v 4 instead of ἦν. The external attestation for ἦν is slightly better than for ἐστὶν; the latter is probably due to accommodating ἦν to γέγονεν; moreover the occurrence of ἦν in the next line indicates that such was read also in the first." Beasley-Murray

φῶς, φῶτος n light

"The life was the essential energy of the Word. The Word signified the communication of the knowledge of God; hence the life was the light of men, which gave them true knowledge and by shining in their midst submitted them to judgement." Barrett.

**Verse 5**

καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

σκοτία, ας f darkness

Because John identifies Jesus with the light of the world, 'darkness' in consequence takes on a corresponding ethical quality: it is those who oppose Jesus and the Gospel.

φαινω shine, give light

The present tense indicates continuous action.

καταλαμβάνω attain, sieze; midd. realize, understand

καταλαμβάνω may mean to overcome, or, especially in the middle voice, 'to grasp with the mind' John may mean both here (so Barrett). Carson terms it, "A masterpiece of planned ambiguity." Perhaps, 'the darkness did not *master* the light.'

**Day 1023: John 1:6-13****Verses 6-8**

"The Word in whom inheres the life which is the light of men was first displayed in the public arena of history when a man sent from God bore witness to him." Carson. "His ministry provides the historical context for the beginning of the gospel, and heralds the appearance of the incarnate Logos in the world, which is the theme of the following verses." Sanday & Headlam.

**Verse 6**

Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης·

The aorist ἐγένετο is to be contrasted with the continuous tenses of verses 1-5 – we now touch the plane of history.

ἀπεσταλμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s  
ἀποστελλω send, send out

"Sent and commissioned by God; like Moses (Ex 3:10-15) and the prophets (e.g. Isa 6:8); like Jesus himself (3:17 and many other passages)." Barrett.

παρὰ preposition with gen from

**Verse 7**

οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ.

μαρτυρία, ας f testimony, witness

εἰς μαρτυρίαν for the purpose of witnessing. Witness (μαρτυρεῖν, μαρτυρία) holds an important place in the thought of the gospel.

μαρτυρήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s  
μαρτυρεῶ bear witness, testify, be a witness

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας  
πιστεῦω believe (in), have faith (in)

"The second ἵνα clause is dependent on the first. The purpose of John's witnessing, though not its actual result, was that all should believe in Jesus. πιστεῦειν (cf. Hebrew יָאֵמֵן) corresponds closely to μαρτυρεῖν; it means to accept the testimony as valid, and the fact thereby attested as fact. Cf. 1:35-7; the two disciples heard John's witness and believed." Barrett.

**Verse 8**

οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that (one), he, she, it

**Verse 9**

Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

ἀληθινός, α, ον real, genuine, true

"In John's usage, ἀληθινός is to be distinguished from ἀληθής, which is applied only to opinions and statements, and those who hold or make them... and means simply 'veracious' ... ἀληθινός [generally] means 'real', 'genuine'." Barrett.

φωτίζω give light to, light, shine on, enlighten

Barrett thinks that this refers not to inner enlightenment (general revelation) since verse 10 denies this, but rather the light shines to reveal what men truly are – it shines to judgement (cf. 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Tim 1:10). It should therefore be translated, "... which shines upon every man..." Carson similarly sees this as a reference to the fact that Jesus' coming sheds light upon all, exposing them for what they are.

ἐρχομενον may agree either with ἀνθρώπων or φῶς, i.e. of the coming of men into the world or of the incarnation. The latter is preferred by Barrett and others who cite 3:19 as a parallel. Carson also argues for this reading which is reflected in the NIV text (with the alternative reflected in a footnote).

**Verse 10**

ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.

κοσμος in John's Gospel generally means the world of men and of human affairs. Barrett provides helpful analysis of its use.

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

John uses the verbs γινωσκω and εἶδον in an OT sense, almost equivalent to faith, rather than the Hellenistic sense. However, John's usage does not exclude the cognitive element in 'knowledge'.

**Verse 11**

εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.

ἴδιος, α, ον one's own

The neuter plural perhaps means 'his own property' (cf. 19:27), though it could here mean possessions – Israel, the temple etc. ἴδιοι means his own people – i.e. the Jews.

παρέλαβον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl  
παραλαμβάνω take, receive, accept

"Again and again under the old covenant, the prophets describe the recalcitrance of the people of God. 'All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations – a people who continually provoke me to my very face' (Is 65:2-3), declares the Lord. 'From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now [the onset of the Babylonian exile], day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff necked and did more evil than their forefathers' (Je 7:25-26). This is the theme that John is picking up, and will develop in his own way; for if there was one dominant point that Christians had to make in their evangelism of the first-century Jews (whether Jews steeped in a semitic tradition or those more orientated to the hellenistic world), it was that the Scriptures themselves require that the man they proclaimed as Saviour and Lord be crucified and largely rejected by his own people. That theme, as we shall see, reaches a climax in 12:37-41." Carson.