

COMPARISON OF JOHN 1:1-5 AND 1 JOHN 1:1-5

"In the beginning was the Word (eternality), and the Word was with God (equality), and the Word was God (Deity). The same was in the beginning with God (equality). All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:1-5).

In John's Gospel, Christ the Eternal Word.

John begins by establishing the eternality of Jesus Christ, and that He is one with the Father. These words, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18), compliment the opening verses. Every Jew believed in the O.T. Jehovah. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4). Even the vulgar Jews were taught that the Word of God was the same with God. What they would not accept was that Jesus Christ was the Jehovah of the O.T. Yet it cannot be denied for His name in the O.T. was I AM. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:13,14). The Lord told the Jews, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). There are between 45-50 times in the book of John where the Lord Jesus says He is I AM. Two that stand out, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am**" (John 8:56-58). "As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6).

We have a record of the Word conceived (John 1:14), and the Word spoken (John 1:18). Christ is the eternal Word, and by Him, God has spoken in these last days (Hebrews 1:2). God has made known His mind to us through the Word, the Logos, i.e. the Divine Expression. John the Baptist was the voice, but Christ is the Word.

"In the beginning was the Word," tells of His existence, not only before His incarnation, but before all time. The world was from the beginning, but the Word was before all time. The Word had a being before the world had a beginning. The Word was in the beginning, and therefore ever was, or eternal. Because God would establish all things in the mouth of two or three witnesses, and to establish Christ's equality with the Father, we have the same truth repeated twice. The Word was with God, and the same was in the beginning with God. The Word was with God as ever with Him.

To further show that the Word was eternal it is written that He created all things. He was with God and active in the Divine operations of creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Therefore all things being made by Him, He Himself is not a created being. He did not create Himself, for He ever was God. His creative acts are mentioned twice also: (1) All things were made by Him. (2) Without Him was not anything made that was made. God the Father did nothing without Christ in that work, and thus gives proof that Christ is God.

In Him was life, i.e. He has life in Himself because He is the eternal I AM. He is the true God, and the living God. (See also: Deut. 5:26; Joshua 3:10; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Jeremiah 10:10). He would say, "I AM the resurrection and the life," and "I AM the way, the truth, and the life." All living creatures have their life in Him, and all the life that is in the creation is derived from Him. In the spiritual realm the believer also knows that Christ

is his life (Colossians 3:4). The Life was the light of men. Life in man is greater than in other creatures, it is rational, not merely animal, and it was the eternal Word which lightened the minds of men. The light of reason and of sense is from the Word.

He that commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness was Himself long a light shining in darkness. He who gave the light of reason to man is also the same who must give the light of Divine revelation (Hebrews 4:12). Life comes first. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Then comes comprehension. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The eternal Word shone to a sinful world even before He was manifest in the flesh, and "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Yet there is something of the eternal Word which shines in the natural conscience of all mankind. Man instinctively knows that there is a Divine Being whatever their concept of Him may be. Man instinctively knows that he must worship something as his god. The light of the natural man cannot comprehend the light of God. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Darkness and sin overpowered and eclipsed this light, and man would not come to this light lest his deeds be reproved. The Jews had the light of the O.T., but did not comprehend Christ in them. The eternal Word came into the world, and was the Light of the world to bring man out of darkness and into this marvelous light, but man did not comprehend who He was.

John has presented the Eternality, the Equality, and the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His full Godhood, and His Divine Sonship. John has unveiled the Divine glories of Christ, revealed Him as the only begotten Son of the Father, and Who in His condescension was full of grace and truth. Christ Himself said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," (an explicit statement of His eternity). John presents Christ as the I AM in seven ways. "I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35). "I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I AM the door" (John 10:7,9). "I AM the good shepherd" (John 10:11). "I AM the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). "I AM the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). "I AM the true vine" (John 15:1).

John also ascribes the attribute of omniscience to Christ on several occasions. See these references: John 2:24,25; 4:16-19,29; 6:61,64; 9:3; 11:4; 13:1,3,11,19,38; 14:29; 16:2-4,16-20,30; 18:4,32; 19:28; 20:24-27; 21:15-17,21,22.

John also ascribes the attribute of omnipotence to Christ (other than the miracles which He did). See these references: 5:26; 7:6,30; 8:59; 10:39; 15:5,7,24; 16:28; 17:2; 19:11,30; 20:17; 21:6.

In John's epistle, Christ the Incarnate Word.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:1-5).

The Gospel of John and this epistle wonderfully agree in the titles and character of the Redeemer. The Word, the Life, the Light, and His name was the Word of God. For

the title "the Word," compare 1 John 1:1; 5:7; with John 1:1; Revelation 19:13. For the characteristic of love, compare 1 John 3:1; 4:7-10; with John 3:16. For regeneration, compare 1 John 3:9; 5:1; with John 3:5,6. For water and blood, compare 1 John 5:6; with John 19:34.

John begins this epistle with the message of the actual humanity of Christ, the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15) fulfilled. Instead of saying, "**In the beginning,**" he says, "**That which was from the beginning,**" which deals with time. It is a strong affirmation that the Son of God who is the Life (John 1:4) has appeared in the flesh. The eternal Life would assume mortality, and would put on flesh and blood (in the entire human nature), and so dwell among us. Here is condescension and kindness indeed that eternal Life (a Person of eternal, essential life) should come to visit mortals, and to procure eternal life for them, and then to confer it on them. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). The Word was God, as flowing out from God, as speech flows out from us declaring what we are, but Christ was more than a vocal Word, He is a vital Word the Word of Life, that uncreated Life, the Living Word. He was with the Father before His manifestation to us, and before anything was made (John 1:3).

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you" (1 John 2:26). "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and now even already is it in the world" (1 John 4:3). History reveals that soon after the apostles were dead the actual physical human body of the Lord Jesus was denied to have actually existed. One of the teachings of the Gnostics was that the body of the Lord Jesus was visible, but not real, and Christ only seemed to be a man. If John had stated that he saw and heard, but not handled, then it might be pretended that Christ was a mere appearance assumed without reality. John would destroy the teaching of the unbelieving world by this means, and demonstrate that it was no private fancy, or cunningly devised fable.

John presents the evidences that the Son of God was incarnate in the flesh. John was privileged as a disciple, and an apostle, to actually hear, see, look upon, and touch the physical body of the Lord Jesus Christ both before His death (John 13:23), and after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-40). This is the reason the Holy Spirit writes this epistle through John and not Paul. Paul states, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul did see the risen Christ, but "as one born out of due time" (1 Corinthians 15:8). John had a personal acquaintance with Jesus manifest in the flesh, and personal contact with all that was manifested in Him, by Him, and through Him. John had heard Him, gazed into His face, and leaned upon His breast. John had been subjected to all the senses, and claims to be a competent witness to everything the Son of God was, and the first indications on earth of what He was, as the Messiah.

John presents the sufficient demonstrations of the reality of Christ's actual physical presence in the world.

(1) To their ears, they heard the words of His mouth. The Life assumed a mouth and tongue, that He might utter words of life. The apostles not only heard of Him, but they heard Him Himself speak. He who spoke as never man spake before or since.

(2) To their eyes, the Word became visible. The Word would not only be heard, but seen, seen publicly, privately, from afar, and nearby. He was seen in His life and ministry, in His transfiguration on the mount, i.e. "eye witnesses of His Majesty" (2 Peter 1:16), hanging, bleeding, and dying on the cross, and after His resurrection from the dead.

(3) To their internal sense, i.e. to the eyes of their mind. They looked upon Him, or that

which was rationally collected from what they saw (His works), for the senses are the informers of the mind. What we have discerned and viewed in His miracles and signs which He performed, i.e. surely this is the Son of God.

(4) To their hands, they handled (touched and felt) the Word of life (Luke 24:39,40). This is to give full conviction to the truth, reality, and solidity of His body. The Lord took care to satisfy all the senses of His apostles that they might be all the more authentic witnesses of Him in the world, and to assure them He was the Son of God manifested in the flesh.

"The Word of life," and "that eternal life," are titles which refer to His eternal relation to the Father, of whose nature He is the express image, of whose will He is the Divine expression, and of whose life He is the communicator. Now this eternal relation---what He is to the Father from everlasting---must be viewed in connection with what He is as He dwells among us on this earth. It is "the Man Christ Jesus" who is the "manifested life." He is so from first to last, and all the days of His flesh. From His being "made of a woman, made under the law," to His being "made sin and made a curse" for us, and thereafter, "for His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, highly exalted." From the time John the Baptist reveals to the disciples that He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," to the hour when John testifies that His side was pierced and "there came out blood and water."

Every intervening incident, every miracle, every discourse, every act of grace, every word of wisdom, and of love, is part of this manifestation. In every one of them "that eternal life, which was with the Father" is manifested unto us. He who lives with the Father evermore, dwelling in His bosom, is manifesting to us in Himself---in His manhood, in His feelings, His sayings, His doings, His sufferings, as a man dwelling among us---what that Life is. It is not liable to time's accidents and passions, but is unchanging, eternal, imperturbable, which He shares with the Everlasting Father, and which He now shares with us, and we with Him.

In the midst of all the conditions of our death this life is manifested, for He who is the life takes our death. In no other way could "that eternal life which was with the Father be manifested unto us." We are dead, and if that were not so, what need would there be of a new manifestation of life to us? Originally the divine life was imparted to man for he was made in the image of God. But that image is lost and marred by sin, and death is our portion, our very nature. Death is the reverse, or God's opposite, having in it no element of changeless repose, but tossings of guilt, fear, wrath, and hatred. Such are those to whom the eternal life which was with the Father is manifested. We are thus dead and sentenced to a righteous doom as transgressors to this death, and hopelessly involved in its uneasy and restless darkness. How then can life, the life that is with the Father, be manifested to us, if it is not life that overcomes this dark death---that is itself the death of it---that completely disposes of it, and puts it finally and forever out of the way?

So He who is "the eternal life, which was with the Father," is manifested to us as destroying this death. He destroys it in the only way in which it can be destroyed righteously and thoroughly, by taking it upon Himself, bearing it for us in our stead, and dying the very death which we have most justly deserved. He gives clear and certain assurance that this death of ours need not stand in the way of our having the life of God manifested to us, and in an even higher end than it was, or could have been manifested to man at first. Now the life of God is manifested personally in Him who is "the life," for He was the Son dwelling in the bosom of the Father.

He who so wondrously takes our death from us is Himself the life, "that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us," so manifested that He takes our death, and gives us His life. He is one with us and we are one with Him. Thus,

in Him who is "the life" we enter into life, into that eternal life with the Father where there is no more any element of guilt, but only trust, love, and peace forever.

The Word of life was "made 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." What John beheld of His glory on the mount of Transfiguration he did not then understand, nor what he witnessed of the agony in the garden before the crucifixion. What he perceived then was all dark to his mind and heart, in so much that when Christ was taken away they felt Him lost to them. They woefully said, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: . . ." (Luke 24:21). But now John had a new sense of spiritual insight imparted to him and the whole meaning of the accursed death was swallowed up in the Life manifested. A new light, a new grace and glory, all the presence of our Lord and Master with us in life.

To declare what we saw and heard, as we saw it at the time, would have been to little avail. It would have only been part of the truth, and we would have asked with Philip, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8), and the Lord's answer, ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). But now we can say that we have seen Him, we have witnessed of the grace and truth of which He was full, and as the Word made flesh and dwelt among us. We can now say we have seen and heard in its fulness "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." What that "eternal life" is, how He is that life with the Father, righteous and holy, how He is that life to us who were dead in sin, this is what is manifested in Him as He was on earth, and in all He taught, and did, and suffered. What that eternal life is the Lord testifies in His farewell prayer for His people, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

John would call to attention all the testimony which he had borne on this subject to counteract the errors which had begun to prevail. That the hearers might believe his testimony and have the same belief, hope, and joy that the apostles had which saw the Incarnate Son of God manifested among them. That they might share in the peace and joy which resulted from the manifestation of the Son of God in human form on the behalf of men. In their fellowship they partook, in some respects, of the feelings, aims, and the joys which God has. There was union in affection, desire, and plan. They loved the same truth and were engaged in the same work, were of the same mind with the mind of Christ, and the consciousness of this, and the joy which attended it, is true fellowship.

John wrote these things respecting Him who was manifest in the flesh, and the results which flow from that manifestation, that our joy may be full. If our Lord had not been manifested in the flesh as "that eternal life," there would be no cause for joy, and we would have no hope.

John lays great emphasis on the incarnation of the Son of God. He begins with it, presents it in various forms, and dwells upon it as if he would not have it forgotten or misunderstood. It has all importance attached to it because it is the most wonderful of events of which we have knowledge, and is most deeply concerned with our eternal welfare. The true believer has an intense interest in this truth, but the world passes it by in unbelief and as unimportant. No true believer can look upon the fact that the Son of God became incarnate except with deepest emotion for it is the means of our salvation by grace.