**John 1:1-5**

| MGNT (ENG) | NKJ (ENG) | ESV (ENG) | NASB (ENG) | RVA-2015 (SPA) | NR-2006 (ITA) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,  καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν,  καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν θεὸς | In the beginning was the Word,  and the Word was with God,  and the Word was God. | In the beginning was the Word,  and the Word was with God,  and the Word was God. | In the beginning was the Word,  and the Word was with God,  and the Word was God. | En el principio era el Verbo,  el Verbo estaba con Dios  y el Verbo era Dios. | Nel principio era la Parola,  la Parola era con Dio,  e la Parola era Dio. |
| οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. | He was in the beginning with God. | He was in the beginning with God. | He was in the beginning with God. | Este estaba en el principio con Dios. | Essa era nel principio con Dio. |
| πάντα ἐγένετο διʼ αὐτοῦ,  καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ ἕν ἐγένετο  ὃ γέγονεν. | All things were made through Him,  and without Him nothing was made  that was made. | All things were made through him,  and without him was not any thing made  that was made. | All things came into being through Him,  and apart from Him not even one thing came into being  that has come into being. | Todas las cosas por medio de él fueron hechas,  y sin él nada  de lo que ha sido hecho  fue hecho. | Ogni cosa è stata fatta per mezzo di lei,  e senza di lei neppure una delle cose fatte  è stata fatta. |
| ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν ζωὴ,  καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. | In Him was life,  and the life was the light of men | In him was life,  and the life was the light of men. | In Him was life,  and the life was the Light of mankind. | En él estaba la vida,  y la vida era la luz de los hombres. | In lei era la vita,  e la vita era la luce degli uomini. |
| Καὶ τὸ φῶς φαίνει ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ,  καὶ ἡ σκοτία οὐ κατέλαβεν αὐτὸ | And the light shines in the darkness,  and the darkness did not comprehend it. | The light shines in the darkness,  and the darkness has not overcome it. | And the Light shines in the darkness,  and the darkness did not grasp it. | La luz resplandece en las tinieblas,  y las tinieblas no la dominaron. | La luce splende nelle tenebre,  e le tenebre non l’hanno sopraffatta. |

The Gospel according to John is one that has endured the scrutiny of thousands of minds throughout dozens of centuries and whose Spiritual riches and Theological significance remain unextracted to fullness, indeed, great is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16). This is especially true of John’s introduction to his letter, often titled “The Prologue,” which encompasses the first eighteen verses of the book. Of special significance to this paper, are the first five verses of this section, where the apostle John develops some of the sweetest and most profound teachings regarding the Divinity of Jesus Christ.[[1]](#footnote-0) It is clear from this passage that John deems very important that his audience possess a clear understanding of who Christ is—namely YHWH incarnate[[2]](#footnote-1)— before he develops his epistle. He is not introducing a new god, but rather expanding on the knowledge of the God from the Hebrew Scriptures.

*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος*

It is almost impossible to read John’s first sentencewithout being transported to Genesis 1:1.[[3]](#footnote-2) In the beginning, before God created the world*,* “the Word already was into being”[[4]](#footnote-3) (Jn. 8:58). In other words, John is delivering that the existence of the Word extends “behind and beyond creation,”[[5]](#footnote-4) nothing of what was made came in the absence of His presence (Col. 1:15). The similarity in language to the Genesis story is one that John will employ for the rest of his prologue, thus strengthening a “connection, a continuation, and even a development with the [God of] the Old Testament.”[[6]](#footnote-5)

*καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν θεὸς*

The use of the term *λόγος* is not because John lacks a name, he will introduce the Name, Jesus Christ, in verse seventeen. Rather, he structures this sentence in resemblance to philosophical writings of his time “most particularly in the writings of the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo.”[[7]](#footnote-6) He uses this language in order to convey the message that he has in mind: the Word is the visible expression of the invisible God in the same way that words are the audible expression of a person's inaudible thoughts.[[8]](#footnote-7) In this way, he enables his audience to link the *λόγος* with the σὰρξ (in verse 14) that the *λόγος* took on, “a true human body and…a reasonable human soul”.[[9]](#footnote-8)

*καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.*

How can one explain the oneness of God in light of verse two is a great dilemma. One thought is clear, however, that God is a relationship within Himself[[10]](#footnote-9) and He necessitates the company of none. Before the angels were created and the physical world was spoken into existence, YHWH already was in relationship with Himself.[[11]](#footnote-10) A grammatical aspect worth highlighting is John’s use of the accusative to depict the relationship between the *λόγος* and *θεόν.* The two nouns are grammatically associated not by “one of the two major Greek words for ‘with’ (syn and meta) but the more intimate preposition pros,”[[12]](#footnote-11) which can convey not only relationships but even presence.[[13]](#footnote-12) This is a grammatical expression that Jesus would also later exercise in chapter seventeen, verse five, *“…δόξασόν με σύ πάτερ παρὰ σεαυτῷ…”* Hence, this line reinforces John’s theological idea introduced in his last sentence, that is, Christ’s pre-existence which “shines through these words unambiguously. Jesus had glory before the world was: and *He[[14]](#footnote-13)* has it in the presence of the Father (para soi, ‘with you’).”[[15]](#footnote-14)

*καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν θεὸς*

The apostle casts more light upon the Oneness of God by asserting that the Word was not only in the presence of God, He was God Himself. Thus, he is not introducing a second god. He was not “a god,” as Arians would have it, but He was the very YHWH, “which is why, in turn, he is the unique revelation of God.[[16]](#footnote-15)

*οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν*

Verse two stands as a compacted form of everything that was said in verse one.[[17]](#footnote-16)It emphasizes the points: who the Word was, from when He was, and where He was.[[18]](#footnote-17) He was not a subordinate to God, He was God. Hence, when the reader encounters verses three to five of chapter thirteen, they can be sure that “before washing his disciples feet he knew he came from God…”[[19]](#footnote-18)

*πάντα ἐγένετο διʼ αὐτοῦ, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ ἕν ἐγένετο*

Once the identity of the Word has been securely established, the text introduces His role as Creator. This picture resurfaces to the mind the creation story in Genesis, bolstering the divinity of the Word once more. If God created the world (Gen. 1:1) and everything was created through the Word (Col. 1:16), then it follows that the Word is God. The creator role of Christ, thus, gains even more strength by the employment of the verb *ἐγένετο,* the same verb used in the LXX of Genesis one, “where it serves as a foundational term that expresses the creation power and activity of God.”[[20]](#footnote-19)

*ὃ γέγονεν.*

As the apostle prepares to develop the Christology of the Word in the following verses, he is quite careful to add a qualification to the adjective *πάντα* in his last statement, lest his audience gets the idea of a duplicity of sons, as some have in the past.[[21]](#footnote-20) The Word did create all things, but it is clear that the only things able to come into existence through Him were those whose nature is not eternal. Hence, the Word, who is also the only begotten son (verse 18) could not have been created if He, Himself, is the creator. The Word was born in flesh (verse 14) but not created through the flesh. Rather, through the incarnation “God adds human being to his divine being.”[[22]](#footnote-21)

*ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν ζωὴ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

The text now passes from the role of the Word to the nature of the Word, namely life. The apostle uses the term Life a total of 36 times[[23]](#footnote-22) and every time it has a connotation beyond biological existence. In this passage the term Life is used to connect the Creator with His creatures. Not only was the Word life, but that Life became Light to all man (Jn. 8:12). “The creature, Jesus of Nazareth…came into being in the womb of his mother Mary by the work of God the Father’s Holy Spirit…[and][[24]](#footnote-23) the Creator Word came down from heaven and united with Jesus.”[[25]](#footnote-24) God displayed His selflessness when he resolved to share Life with that which He had created[[26]](#footnote-25) (Phil. 2:7). We can say, then, that “precisely because He was in the form of God he recognized equality with God as a matter not of getting but of giving.”[[27]](#footnote-26)

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

A sudden shift in time is introduced into the narrative. The language of the account has suddenly passed from the past tense to the present tense,[[28]](#footnote-27) articulating that the Light *shines*.[[29]](#footnote-28) Although the picture of the passage, no doubt, paints similar strokes to the creation story once again (Gen. 1:3-5), John wants to emphasize that this is not an action that happened at a specific point in time, but an event that is presently and continuously happening. The present tense action modified by the noun Light is contrasted with the past tense action modified by the noun darkness, which could not overcome or apprehend[[30]](#footnote-29) the Light (the verb *κατέλαβεν* allows for both interpretations). Thus, the Light shines, and will continue to shine, but the darkness is defeated and defeated forever. Many instances of tension between Light and darkness are provided in the epistle of John, but perhaps the one that ascends higher is the glorious triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over death. Darkness might have reigned for a fleeting moment (Lk. 22:53) but it was striped from all its power shortly after (Lk. 24:5-8). I cannot think of better words to summarize the meaning of this verse than the words of Donal Macelod, “He is not an absent Christ once active in history but now withdrawn. He is an ever-present one, the great freedom fighter that has already destroyed the powers and who, following his death and resurrection, continues to bring liberation to the world's spiritual slaves.”[[31]](#footnote-30)

Glory to Him!

1. Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2012), n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Charles A. Gieschen, “The YHWH Christology of the Gospel of John,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (January 2021), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. The Septuagint (LXX). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* (Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Edward W Klink III, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2016), n.p.. [Note: brackets mine]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p; Percy Hartill, *The Unity of God: A Study in Christian Monotheism,* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1952), 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John : 2 Volumes*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p; [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Klink, *John*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Capitalization of the personal pronoun “he” mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Ibid., 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Klink, *John*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Klink, *John*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Cyril of Alexandria. *On the Unity of Christ*. Edited by John Anthony McGuckin. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 190.. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Klink, *John*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Brackets mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Hartill, *The Unity of God: A Study in Christian Monotheism,* 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. Italics mine for emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. Keener, *The Gospel of John : 2 Volumes*, n.p.. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. MacLeod, *The Person of Christ,* 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)