



JOHN 1:1-5 | IN THE BEGINNING, THE WORD

- Verse 1 –
 - The phrase **In the beginning** is used in Greek only four times, here and verse 2, as well as Acts 11:15 and Philippians 4:15.
 - It requires an assumed completion. In the beginning *of what?*
 - In Acts 11:15 it is assumed by context to be *the beginning of the ministry*.
 - In Philippians 4:15 it is stated to be **in the beginning of the gospel**.
 - Here, we must allow context and Scripture itself to speak to the matter. Since the Bible itself begins with the words **In the beginning** we are forced to assume *the beginning, even before time* as in Genesis 1:1.
 - We are next introduced to **the Word**. The Greek is λόγος [logos], a word which means more than the combination of letters, but rather the *meaning and sound* of the combination of letters. Logos as *word* is the spoken word (also making connection to Genesis 1).
 - John's writings bear similarity to Heraclitus, a sixth-century BC philosopher often considered the first philosopher of western civilization.
 - Heraclitus wrote, "Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it – not only before hearing it, but even after they have heard it for the first time ... though all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be quite without any experience of it ..." (<https://modernstoicism.com/heraclitus-and-the-birth-of-the-logos/>, accessed Jan. 21, 2019).
 - Notice these similarities:
 - Both use the term *logos*.
 - Both speak of the *Logos* as eternal.
 - Both speak of the incomprehension of the *Logos* (see Jn. 1:10).
 - Both speak of the *Logos* as the source of all things.
 - Both speak of a rejection of the *Logos* (Jn. 1:11).
 - Both men were (by tradition) living in Ephesus when they wrote.
 - John goes farther than Heraclitus, seeming to answer the philosopher, when he tells us that the *Logos* became flesh, thus giving understanding to this great intangible. John also defines the *Logos* as **God**.
 - Note that John teaches that **In the beginning...the Word was**. That is, the Word predates the beginning (see v. 3).
- Verse 2 –
 - While KJV chose the words **The same**, the Greek uses a singular masculine pronoun. Darby translates as "He was in the beginning with God."
 - The repetition of **with God** (v. 1 and v. 2) is likely to help us distinguish that Jesus both **was God** and was **with God**, a purely trinitarian concept.

- Verse 3 –
 - This reinforces the pre-existence of the Word. Since **all things were made by him** the *Logos* is prior to **things** (the Greek simply reads “*all*” with the word πάντα [panta], an adjective requiring a noun, whether stated or unstated).
 - This is a fundamental worldview issue. The “first thing” or “first cause” is a key to the way a person interprets the world.
 - A *deist* believes a deity is first, who created all other things. A deist will primarily be concerned with the knowledge of deity. There are, of course, many varieties of deists.
 - A *materialist* believes *matter* existed first, and all formation of things and ideas formed later out of that matter. A materialist will therefore be primarily concerned with the preservation of matter.
 - A *socialist* believes that the *first cause* is human society, and that the wellbeing of the whole of society is the matter of primary concern.
 - The goal of the fourth Gospel, it seems, is to convince the reader that Jesus is *God*, thus the Gospel lays forth this premise from the beginning.
- Verses 4-5 –
 - **In him (the *Logos*) was life.**
 - He is the source of life, a message given in verse 3 in general but clarified here.
 - However, **life** is further clarified as **the light of men**, thus saying, “real life is impossible without Christ.”
 - Unfortunately, though **the light shineth in darkness** (compare Gen. 1:2-3), **the darkness comprehended it not.**
 - The word **comprehended** is καταλαμβάνω [katalambano], from *lambano* (to receive or to take) with the ultimate magnifying prefix *kata*.
 - There is disagreement on translation which brings a measurably different meaning.
 - The ESV says “the darkness has not overcome it,” using a *take* sense of the word.
 - The KJV uses a *receive* sense of the word.
 - The *kata* prefix is the reason KJV took “take” and made it into **comprehend**.
 - There is no equivalent English word that means “to fully know the total value and use of that which has been received.”
 - Comprehension is “To lay hold of with the mind or senses” (Oxford English Dictionary). Light is not something one can grasp physically, so it must be grasped “with the mind or senses.”
 - The *lambano* root is *receive* or *take*, but in this context, receiving and taking are not equal. Did the darkness “not receive” or did the darkness “not take?”
 - The sense of the ESV: *the light overpowered darkness*.
 - The sense of the KJV: *the darkness remains*.
 - Conclusion: while *the darkness has not overcome it* (ESV) is possible grammatically, it makes no sense in the context of John 1, which is a message about *rejection* of the light.