

Open My Eyes

Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Law. – Psalm 119:18

Through the Bible in a year reading guide – Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church

October – Week 41

Completed

8 - Isaiah	38-42	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 - Isaiah	43-46	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 - Isaiah	47-51	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 - Isaiah	52-57	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 - Isaiah	58-63	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 - Isaiah	64-66	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 - John	1-3	<input type="checkbox"/>

We read God's Word:

To know Him better

To love Him more

To walk in His ways

To be conformed to the image of His Son

This week's reading: as we finish Isaiah, you may want to use a colored pencil to highlight all the times God declares there is none like Him, and that He is the only God. **Israel** received "double for all her sins" (40:2). Is God "unfair"? No, the wage of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), so punishment less than death is mercy. An illustration: death equals 100% punishment; if His punishment was perhaps 20% (exile, not death) then, if Israel received "double" (40%), that is still mercy (60% less than deserved). **Isaiah** mentions Cyrus by name (44:28, 45:1) approximately 200 years before he became king and let Israel return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. **Once** again, we see in 57:1-2 that God removes the righteous (this time by death) before sending wrath. (See Weeks 8 and 20 for more on God taking the righteous out of the way before sending judgment and wrath. Truly, God is consistent with what He told Abraham in Gen. 18:23-33.) **John** opens his account of the life of Jesus much like an attorney presenting his opening statements, then he calls forward witnesses who had an encounter with Jesus and their testimony about Him. **John 1:1c** is clear: "the Word was God." - not "a god", nor "Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Spirit". John (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) used a nuance available in the Greek language to indicate the Trinity. If either of those heresies were true, John could have specified that! (See the supplemental page on John 1:1c.) **Some** cults teach that Jesus was raised "spiritually" but Jesus' reply regarding authority proves that He was raised bodily from the dead - you destroy this temple (His body) and I will raise it (His body) in three days (2:18-21). **One** man encountering Jesus was Nicodemus, who said that Jesus was a teacher from God. Nicodemus was a good man; but, Jesus said it was necessary for him to be born again! Being a good man would not get him into Heaven. Jesus also mentions the time Moses lifted up the bronze snake in the wilderness (Num. 21:8) - this was God's only provision for them to live if bitten by a snake. Their only hope was to take God at His word. Likewise, Jesus is God's only provision for eternal life.

Insights from the Original Biblical Languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic):

The prophecy in Isaiah 53 tells of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Messiah, and in 53:10, that He rendered "Himself as a Guilt Offering". In Hebrew, the word is אִשָּׁמָה (pronounced "ah-shawm"), the same word used in Leviticus 5 and 6. A Sin Offering could be offered for whole nation, the priesthood, and individuals. However, the Asham was only for individuals. In the same way, Jesus paid for the sins of the world (John 1:29, 3:16-17; Rom. 5:18; 1 John 2:2, 4:14, etc.), but it doesn't mean everyone will have eternal life. His Guilt Offering will only be applied to individuals who receive Him (John 1:12-13). **John 1:1** tells us that the Word continually existed prior to creation: the Greek word for "was" ἦν ("āin", rhymes with "pain") means continual action in the past - the Word was existing continually before the beginning. **The** Greek word for "love" in John 3:19 ("men loved the darkness rather than the Light") is "agape", a love that is willing to sacrifice for the thing loved, even if evil (for "darkness" to hide sin. Also 2 Tim. 4:10, 2 Pet 2:15).

How has God revealed Himself in this week's reading? What has He shown me this week?

We see the deity of Jesus in Isaiah: Yahweh comes and His reward is with Him in 40:10-11; Jesus is the One coming and His reward is with Him in Rev. 22:12. Yahweh is the First and the Last (41:4, 44:6); Jesus is the First and the Last (Rev. 1:17-18; 22:13). Yahweh does not give His glory to another (42:8); Jesus shared His Father's glory (John 17:5). While some may be called "god or gods", Yahweh says "before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me" (43:10, 45:5, 48:12; and in 44:8 God says, "I know of none."); therefore, Jesus cannot be "a god" (John 1:1c). Yahweh says "there is no savior besides Me" (43:11); Jesus is "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13). **The** Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary and strength to the weak (40:28-29). He created us for His glory (43:7).

John 1:1c – “and the Word was God”

The first verses of John give us a very specific and wonderful view of who Jesus is and the triune nature of God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” First, the Word was already existing before anything was created. The Greek word for “was” in verses 1-2 is ἦν (“āin”, rhymes with “pain”) and means continual action in the past, so, at the time of the beginning, the Word was already continually existing. The Word was God and was with God, therefore, while He is God, there is more to “God” than just the Word. He made all things, and more than that, everything that has been made was made by Him, so He Himself is not a created thing. Therefore, He falls into the category of “God” rather than someone created. Verse 14 lets us know that the Word is Jesus. Context is always very important!

The third clause in John 1:1 is concise and elegant. It is properly translated “and the Word was God”. With just five short words, John, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, puts to death two heresies: Sabellianism (“Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, Jesus is the Holy Spirit”; one God wearing three hats, moving between these three roles, and that the “Word” and “God” are completely synonymous); and Arianism (the Word was “a god”, a created being). In fact, what John actually wrote, was the only way he could have written it to indicate the orthodox view of the Trinity - that the Father is God, the Son (the Word) is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but there is only one God, in three distinguishable persons - the Father is not the Word or Holy Spirit, the Word is not the Father or the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Word. As the Father and Spirit have the quality, essence, and nature of God, so does the Word. God is more than just the Word; this is how He could be “with” God - the Word was with the Father and Holy Spirit.

The two heresies mentioned above are still with us today. Sabellianism (pronounced “saw-bel-ee-an-ism”), also known as “Modalism”, is found in United Pentecostalism and Swedenborgianism. It was named after Sabellius in the 3rd century. His view was declared a heresy, and Sabellius was excommunicated in 220 AD. Arianism is named after Arius of Alexandria (256-336 AD), and was rejected as heresy in 325 at the Nicene council. This view makes the Word a created being, not deity. We find this view in various cults today. (The Watchtower, The Way International, etc.) Is it possible that John 1:1c could be understood one of these ways? Absolutely NOT!

What if one of these heresies were correct? Could John have written John 1:1c in such a way to make it clear. Absolutely!

First, in John 1:1, the third clause, this is what John wrote: καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος
and God was the Word

“The Word” is the subject, so we move it first in English, “and the Word was God” (deity, having the nature, quality of God, but not all there is to “God”).

Here are other options available to John; they are options that John did NOT write:

If the Holy Spirit wanted John to communicate the Sabellianism view, John could have written it any one of three ways:

- καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος - (“and the God was the Word”) this makes the “Word” and “God” completely the same thing
- καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεὸς - (“and the Word was the God”) this also makes the “Word” and “God” completely the same.
- καὶ ὁ λόγος θεὸς ἦν - (“and the Word God was”) this has the nuance that “the Word alone has the nature of God”. (However, the Father and the Holy Spirit also have the nature of God.)

What if Arianism was true? Could John have made it clear? Absolutely!

- καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν θεὸς - (“and the Word was God”) this word order means, “the Word was (a) god”

Why do the above options make so much difference? Because Koine Greek does not work like English. English has to follow word order rules; Koine Greek is not so limited, and therefore is capable of nuance, precision, and emphatic options that we don’t have in English. Another difference is that, in English, the Definite Article (“the”) has a very narrow/limited use; however, the Koine Greek Article is so much more powerful and useful than our English definite article. It can function like our definite article (to make something indefinite to be definite), but that is not its primary function! The Greek article can do so much more; they used it when we never would, and they omitted it when English demands it. Languages are not codes, and therefore, we cannot treat the Greek article and Greek word order as an English definite article or word order. However, this is exactly what the cults do to make John 1:1c say something other than what the Greek text says.

In the Greek text of John 1:1c, “God” is moved forward for emphasis which stresses essence, quality, nature of the Word. The lack of the article keeps us from identifying the person of the Word (Jesus Christ) with the person of God the Father, and the person of the Holy Spirit. Said differently, the word order tells us that Jesus Christ has all the divine attributes that the Father and Holy Spirit have. Lack of the article tells us that Jesus Christ is not all of God (Father and Holy Spirit) rolled into one. The Word is God, but there is more to God than just the Word.

Summary: The way John wrote the verse proves both Sabellianism and Arianism to be false teaching - heresy. If one of those views were true, he would have written it differently. The lack of the article shows Sabellianism to be error. The word order shows Arianism to be in error.

John 1:1c – “and the Word was God”

Sources used for this paper:

Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL) Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1, by Philip B. Harner, pages 75-87

A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, by H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, pages 140, 148-150 (where they quote a number of other related sources, not owned by me)

Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar, by William D. Mounce, pages 33-34

Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, by Daniel B. Wallace, pages 266-269

Going Deeper with New Testament Greek, by Köstenberger, Merkle, and Plummer, page 163

A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, by A.T. Robertson, page 794