

An exegetical essay on john chapter 1 religion essay



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INTRODUCTION

Unlike the synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John does not begin with the historical Jesus, instead, the author exalts his eternal existences over his earthly entrance into the world. The eternal existence of Jesus is perceived by the use of 'Word' (logos) in the prologue. Thus, the author begins his gospel with the words, 'In the beginning was the Word...' John's Gospel stresses on the deity of Jesus, he strikes the reader straight with the Greek 'Word' (Logos) as a replacement of Jesus until the end of the prologue. One could say that the understanding of this Gospel is centred on the 'Word' (logos) as a key affirmation of the entire Gospel. The prologue affirms that Jesus used the eternal 'Word' which has been translated from the Greek word (logos). In chapter (1: 1-5) the author talked about the pre-existence, in (1: 6-8) he elaborated on the witness of John the Baptist, in (1: 9-13) he highlighted on the light coming to the worlds, in (1: 14-18) he accounted on the incarnation of the Word. This prologue is specially or specifically designed to prepare the way for the evidence of the doings of no ordinary person but Jesus Christ. This paper is an attempt to exegete the passage of (John 1: 1-18).

The Pre-existence Word (1: 1-5)

The commencement of this Gospel as stated, 'in the beginning was the word' has something to do with (Genesis 1: 1). John was trying to say that Jesus Christ was in the beginning and He was the 'Word' which existed in the beginning before creation or before the world began and 'was fully God' (John 1: 1-3). Jesus is indeed the creator, sustainer of all belongings, our source of living and the establishment of eternal life. To understand this <https://assignbuster.com/an-exegetical-essay-on-john-chapter-1-religion-essay/>

concept one must commence with the Father-Son relationship which is the central revelation of John's Gospel and also the key to understand the sayings and deeds of Christ Jesus (17: 5, 24). Extensively, this term (logos) which has a meaning in English as "the Word" was used in Greek literature or theologians and philosophers; among them were the 'Stoics who used the term to describe the principle of divine reason which caused the natural creature to grow.' [1] Philo of Alexander was the mastermind of this idea in his writings and maintained it as an instrument of the world creation. There are dissimilarities between the usage of the 'Word' by John and Philo. In the mind of Philo, he by no means consider the 'Word' as a person and he did not maintain its pre-existence, he denied the incarnation of the 'Word' which is known as Jesus. But in John's mind the 'Word' was maintained and became 'flesh.' This points to Jesus Christ who came to save humanity and dwell among them. One could say the fifth verse of this chapter shows the compassion of the author as a beloved disciple and an eyewitness of Jesus who is trying to communicate the good news to the Jews, Greek philosophers and all kinds of people from generation to generation in his writings. Here John declares that Jesus Christ is the true light, who shines in the darkness, but the darkness which can be translated as sinful man 'has not understood it.' The better understandings of this verse rely on (verse 10-11). [2]

Witness of John the Baptist (1: 6-8)

At this point, the author diverted his thought from eternity towards historical. These verses point to the identity of no other person but John the Baptist who is not the light; however John's job is to testify that Jesus is the coming light. This testimony of John appears strongly in public in (verse 15-34).

[3]John's idea is that, people might believe in Jesus alone and that He is the saviour.

Light Coming to the World (1: 9-13)

In verses 9-13, John's emphasis has changed from witness to Jesus as ' the true light that gives light to every man coming into the world. He is the fulfilment of all light foreshadowed and the one who called light into existence (Genesis 1: 3)."[4]

Regarding the statement of John concerning the ' world did not recognise him' here it means something further than created world? John is referring to people who opposed or do not believe in God or those who reject Christ as the true light. The Israelites were chosen by God to prepare the rest of the world for Christ's coming but they rejected Him despite the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament.[5]In verses 12-13, the author elaborates on how some people received the Word. John's centre of attention is based on the covenant people of God or believers who receive the power to be children of God. This implies to the children who are not born of natural or physical human descent. This is for those who receive Jesus Christ as their personal saviour; they are spiritually born again and have received a completely new life from God through faith.

Incarnation of the Word (1: 14-18)

This last section of the prologue explains how the divine Word points how Jesus came into the world in a human form. Apostle Paul, one of the major characters in the New Testament writings understood this concept (Colossians 2: 9). ' The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us

(John 1: 14).’ The first century church debated on how the Word who was God could become human but that’s not important to John because his main concern is to explain the price that Christ paid. The Bible explains how God’s presence was in the midst of the children of Israel in the tabernacle (Exodus 40: 34-38), although that was on a temporal basis. John also has a similar view in a sense that ‘ the Word became flesh or Jesus became like mortal human being and made his dwelling among us’ likewise God’s presence to the children of Israel in the tabernacle. “ According to Kruse, the reference to ‘ glory’ is also an allusion to God’s presence in the tabernacle.” Moses was instructed by God to build a tabernacle and after finishing Moses couldn’t enter the Tent of meeting because it was ‘ covered by the cloud and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle’ (Exodus 40: 34-35). And that same way God’s glory is been manifested in the Word made flesh. John was an eye witness to Christ’s earthly life and ministry and he saw His glory. He firstly ‘ saw the glory of the ‘ One and Only’ who came from the Father. Furthermore, he saw Christ as the one who comes from the Father and the fact that he is the source of grace and truth.’[6]The evangelist’s intention is for people to see Christ’s ministry as a manifestation of God’s grace and an exposure of his truth.

Christ makes it possible for people to know God better than before, for the reason that God became visible and tangible in Christ. And he is the perfect manifestation of God in human form. Moses accentuated the law of God and His justice, but Christ emphasized His mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness and love. Moses was known as law giver, however Christ is known as the fulfilment of the law (Matthew 5: 17).[7]

This last verse of the prologue is a reminder of the first verse. There was no other better means for people to know God unless the Word point to Jesus Christ the ' One and Only Son' of the living God.

Regarding the statement John made that ' no one has ever seen God' it has something to do with the OT in a sense that Moses did not have the chance to see God face to face, although prophet Isaiah said ' my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty' (Isaiah 6: 5), none of the prophets were able to see God's essential nature. He may be seen in anthropomorphism, but Christ Jesus made it possible to His inner essence or nature. Through Jesus Christ God's nature and will is been revealed. The more a person gets closer to Christ, the better he or she understands the will of God. In Christ people saw the clear picture of God and even touched Him.[8]

Conclusion

The major concern of John in his prologue is to portray Jesus as an eternal being who has existed from the beginning with God. Furthermore, the prologue describes the incarnation of Christ, by coming in human form so as to identify with humanity and to save them from sin. John shows us the complete deity, the divinity and the fullness of God in Christ Jesus. Christ makes it possible for people to know God better than before, for the reason that God became visible and tangible in Christ. And he is the perfect manifestation of God in human form. Moses accentuated the law of God and His justice, but Christ emphasized His mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness and love. John wrote this gospel so that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and by believing we may have eternal life (John 20: 31).