

Verse 1. In the beginning. The first words of this gospel are the same as the first words of the Book of Genesis, the purpose of the writer being to show that He who created the heavens and the earth saves mankind from sin. **Was the Word.** (See John 17. 5.) The word here translated "Word" has the double meaning of *thought and speech*. Dr. Marvin R. Vincent says: "Christ is related to God as the word is related to the idea; the word being not merely a name for the idea, but the idea itself, expressed." The reverent men of antiquity, seeking to make plain to ungodly neighbors the nature of the divine Being, gave to him different descriptive titles or names, as, for instance, *El* (translated God), which means The Strong, and *Adon* (translated Lord), which means The Controller. Among such titles was *Mimra*, The Word, which learned Jews were fond of using. So that John here uses a term already familiar as a name or title of God. Now, the word of a man is the expression of his thought to others, the manifestation of his mind. In broad and figurative usage a cathedral is the word of an architect, and a national constitution the word of a statesman. With something of this broad sense John uses the term "The Word." By it he means us to understand "the going forth of God to the human soul." As John himself sought to make us comprehend his meaning by writing down the words we are now studying, so God perpetually sought to make human beings comprehend his counsel and his will. Dreams, visions, miracles, Mosaic rituals, all methods by which God uttered his thought, were God's word. But none of these adequately appealed to the heart of humanity; not till the only begotten Son (which is in the bosom of the Father) declared him were his character and nature made plain. **Was with God.** Apparently distinct from God. **Was God.** Apparently identical with God. This is a mystery, and efforts to explain it often add to it.

2. The same was in the beginning with God. The evangelist repeats himself in fresh words, so that we may think of the Word as existing from all eternity, with God, "as light is ever with the sun."

3. All things were made by him. (Compare Col. 1. 16, 17.) **Without him was not anything made.** False teachers had invented wild notions of Existences which they called *Eons*, and of a Being whom they termed *Demurgus*, to whom they assigned the origin of spiritual life. But John in this verse and the next makes plain that the life of the universe was derived from the eternal Word.

4. In him was life. As in a great fountain. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he

given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5. 26). **The life was the light of men.** Not merely the light which every morning chases away the darkness of the night, but all intellectual, and especially all moral, light shining upon the consciences of mankind. There is also a clear-shining moral vision—an inner power of seeing—which we call conscience; and an inner Light as well, which we here learn is a direct emanation from God. If, then, we have any apprehension of truth and light and purity, any power over evil, these blessings are all rays from the eternal Light, which is essentially the same as the Life and the Word.

5. The light shineth in darkness. As we have seen under verse 1, this truth of God has been shining through all the centuries, and there have been in all the centuries, perhaps, a few who recognized it. But most minds "liked not to retain God in their knowledge," and so we read in general terms, **the darkness comprehended it not.** "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." These words very evidently apply to the sordid pagans who made gods out of their own bestial passions; they applied equally to the learned Jews who hid from the light behind their traditions and ceremonies; and they apply to-day to all who resist the conviction of conscience and spiritual influences brought home to the mind and heart.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. Older scholars, especially those who have found delight in literature, should have their attention called to the exquisite literary art with which this passage is introduced. Our evangelist, having lifted us into such excess of light as to blind our eyes, now relieves us by turning for a moment toward the shadows where the forerunner of the incarnate Word raises aloft his burning and shining light (that is to say, his lamp), to show by the helpfulness of its rays how much more helpful must be the full shining of the Sun of the soul, the Saviour dear.

7. Came for a witness. To bear testimony. **Of the Light.** And after having borne testimony to that Light for months or years John Baptist woke up with astonishment to find it shining in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. **Through him.** Through John the Baptist. His evidence should have been sufficient. Our Lord declared that there were none greater or more faithful than he. The Jews should have believed and sent his message on to the remotest parts of the earth; but they "would not."

8. He was not that Light. There were still