

INTRODUCTORY

Mark begins his Gospel with the ministry of Jesus, Matthew with His birth, Luke with the Annunciation. John carries us back to the pre-existent life that was "in the beginning with God."

It is natural; for John was the disciple who was most beloved and loved most, and therefore had deepest insight. His Gospel is more taken up with the thoughts and words of Jesus than with His doings, and was written to show His Divinity, and set Him forth as the Divine Life Giver. It is the gospel of the Son of God. "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." (Ch. 20: 31.)

EXPOSITION

V. 1. "*In the beginning.*" The words with which the Book of Genesis also opens; but when the world began to be, the Word was already in existence. "*The Word.*" Greek "*Logos,*" which means a word or utterance of the living voice. The expression, the "Word of the Lord," was used by Jewish writers in the time of Christ as a synonym for Jehovah, especially for Jehovah as manifesting Himself to men, "God in expression." "The Word" was also used in some of the religious philosophies of John's day. John under the guidance of the unerring Spirit of God here makes known at first hand the true nature of the Word.

"*The Word was with God.*" A separate personality. "*The Word was God,*" truly Divine.

"*Was God.*" Not a God, which would have been abominable to Jewish ears.

V. 2. "*Was with God.*" The repetition, as does also the Greek preposition for "with," suggests more than the mere existence of the Word side by side with God. It betokens personal intercourse, fellowship, communion, mutual love.

V. 3. "*Made by Him.*" John is in no doubt. The Word is the Creator. "In Greek philosophy the problem was to ascertain by whom, of what and in view of what the world was made" (Dodds). John supplies the answer, "*All things were made by Him.*" In the first clause of the verse we sweep the universe with a telescope, and to its utmost bounds, we discover only the work of His hands. In the second clause we search creation with a microscope, and find no atom that He has not formed.

V. 4. "*In Him was life.*" To the student of science the origin and nature of life are a profound mystery. The Bible teaches us that, in all its forms, it comes from God, from Him who alone "has life in Himself" (ch. 5: 26).

"*The life was the light of men.*" When God made man in His own image He infused into him

such life—life in its highest form and most abundant measure—that man was enlightened somewhat as God himself is enlightened. "God is light." Where this light exists, what is beautiful, true and good is seen and approved and followed. Such was the condition of man before the Fall.

V. 5. "*The light shineth in the darkness.*" With the Fall and sin came darkness. Man lost the knowledge of God and the love of good. But the eternal, self-existent light had not perished; and, in the darkness, it was still shining. (Heb. 1: 1.) All the various forms of revelation which God gave the world under the old dispensation were beams from the Word, who is The Light.

"*And the darkness apprehended it not,*" i.e., did not lay hold of and use the Light. The mass of mankind still lay without knowledge of Divine truth and without will to follow it.

V. 6-8. The Evangelist is giving in a condensed, but orderly, way the history of Redemption. In the five verses preceding he brings us from the Beginning to the Incarnation, but before he tells us of the Incarnation, for clearness and completeness' sake, he must speak of the Forerunner, the God-sent "witness," the Incarnate Word.

John the Baptist's ministry had made a sensation in Judea. Some, indeed, thought him the Messiah. They were mistaken. "*He was not the Light, but came that he might bear witness of the Light.*"

V. 9. There are different renderings of this verse. That of the R. V. margin is excellent. "The true light which lighteth every man was coming into the world"; even while John was bearing witness and some were mistaking him for the Light.

"*The true light.*" Patriarch, psalmist, prophet, had all revealed some portion of truth. But these were "broken lights." They were but planets shining with reflected brightness. Now the dawn had come; the Sun, the true Light, the Source of all light was rising.