



John's prologue: Christological and doxological significance for the Johannine narrative¹

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Abstract

This article presents a literary exegetical analysis of the prologue (John 1:1-18) of the Johannine narrative with special attention to the author's (narrator's) point of view. The author sets the tone of his gospel and writes with literary beauty while showing his theological points of view that will be seen throughout his narrative to follow. He presents Jesus as the eternal λόγος of God, and thus provides a unique point of view toward the Son of God of the Father who exists from eternity past with God the Father. Merely by studying, reflecting on, and remembering the Gospel's prologue, the reader can understand and relate to the Christological and doxological significance of the Johannine narrative.

Keywords: John; John 1:1-18; John's prologue; Christology; doxology, narratology.

Introduction

The author of John most probably has written the prologue (John 1:1-18) to serve as an introduction to his gospel. It contains a number of important themes consistent with the rest of the gospel, including life (John 1:4), light and darkness (John 1:5, 7-9), witness (John 1:7-8, 15), world (John 1:10), belief and unbelief (John 1:11-12), and grace and truth (John 1:14, 17). Thus, the reader is able to see the connection between the prologue and the rest of the narratives.

The author's subject of the prologue is ὁ λόγος (the Word). Most scholars propose the conceptual background of ὁ λόγος into three sources, namely Greek philosophy (Stoicism, Philo), the personification of wisdom, and the Old Testament.²

In Stoicism current at the time in Hellenistic philosophies, ὁ λόγος was conceived as a sort of

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² Keener (2003:339–363) provides in-depth discussions of ὁ λόγος in Gnosticism, Hellenistic philosophy, Philo, wisdom, word, and Torah, and the relationship between John's ὁ λόγος and ὁ λόγος in the Torah.



cosmic reason. It gave order and structure to the operation of the universe as an impersonal governing principle. According to the thought at the time, a bit of universal $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ resided within people who must live within it to attain dignity and meaning. It is doubtful, however, that this definition constituted the author's primary conceptual foundation (Köstenberger, 1999:52). Such $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, Kim notes, "has no concept of a personal God, no place for historical divine acts in the incarnation, no radical view of sin, no idea of ethical renewal through the ministry of the Word and Spirit, and no hope of the resurrection and eternal fellowship with God in His kingdom" (Kim, 2009:425).

Another proposed meaning of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ is the personification of wisdom in wisdom literature such as Proverbs 8:22-31, where wisdom is presented as a divine being. Wisdom claims preexistence and participation in God's creative activity. Late in the period of the Hebrew Scriptures and beyond that period through the first century, Jewish speculation about wisdom related it to the Torah, the written word of God. Likewise, it became identified with $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ of God (*memra*, the Aramaic for "word"). But despite the similarities, the use of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ in John 1 differs from personified wisdom in several respects.³

The final possibility of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ is 'the depiction of the Word of God in the Old Testament', viewing the prologue of John's gospel with a Hebraic background rather than a Hellenistic one (Köstenberger, 1999:54). This sees the origin of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ as the Old Testament and the Hebrew term דְבַר (*dabar*). Further supporting the Hebraic background is the author's possible deliberate echoing of the Hebrew Scriptures by employing the phrase "in the beginning" to open the gospel, as well as the use of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ in John 1:1 that ties the verse to Genesis 1:3 which describes God's creative acts by the powerful command of His word. The author's adaptation of Isaiah 55:9-11 for his Christological framework has also been proposed as the background of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ in his gospel (Köstenberger, 1999:54).⁴

Moloney (1993:30) suggests that "the choice of the Greek expression $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, whatever its background, allows the author to hint to the reader that from the intimacy between the Word and God which has been described, 'the Word' will now be spoken. A word is essentially about communication. The modality of that communication has not been indicated, but if there is the Word, then it exists to say something". Harris (1994:91) summarizes well:

Why did John choose to call Jesus the Logos in the prologue to his Gospel, and what did he mean by it? As to why the term was used, the answer probably lies with John's audience. John gave no explanation of the Logos, apparently assuming his readers would understand the idea. Greek readers would probably think he was referring to the rational principle that guided the universe and would be shocked to find that this $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ had become not only personalized but incarnate (1:1-14). Jewish readers would be more prepared for some sort of personalized preexistent Wisdom, but they

³ Köstenberger (1999:53) explains the differences in three points: 1) Wisdom literature presents wisdom not as a second person of the Godhead but merely as a divine attribute already present as creation. Jesus on the other hand is portrayed not merely as "with God" (John 1:1-2), but also Himself God (John 1:1); 2) Wisdom is not cast as a person, but merely a concept that is personified, a common literary device. But in John the exact opposite is present: Jesus, a real person, is presented in conceptual terms as $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$; 3) The fact remains that John did not use the term σοφία (wisdom) but the expression $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$.

⁴ Köstenberger (1999:54) also argues that Isaiah 55:9-11 is God's personified Word, not Wisdom. He observes three parallels: 1) $\acute{\omicron}$ $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ is sent by God to accomplish a particular divine purpose; 2) It unfailingly accomplishes this purpose; 3) Afterward it returns to God who sent it.



too would be amazed at the idea of incarnation. John presented Jesus as the true Logos as preparation for his own presentation of Jesus as the Son of God.

Thus, the thrust of the author's prologue is that ὁ λόγος for the reader is a person. The author claims that λόγος is not a category of religious experience, nor is it speculative religious mythology. It is the person, fleshed, living, historical Son of God, Christ. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the preexistent ὁ λόγος. That the eternal life, light, and divine origin flows from an acceptance of the story of the unseen God revealed by the incarnated λόγος. The reader has been told who Jesus is and what He has done. The author tells how the action of God has taken place in history.

Literary structure of the prologue

Some scholars, in describing the literary structure of the prologue, follow a movement in time, from preexistence (John 1:1-2) into creation (John 1:3-5), proceeding through the story of human condition until the incarnation (John 1:6-14) and then the subsequent reception of the incarnate λόγος (John 1:15-18). Other scholars proposed that there are various forms of chiasmic structure of the prologue. One proposed by Culpepper (1980:1-31) seems to be the most thorough, and thus serves as a good model for discussion:

- A. The Word's activity in creation (John 1:1-5)
 - B. John's witness concerning the light (John 1:6-8)
 - C. The incarnation of the Word (John 1:9-14)
 - B. John's witness concerning the Word's preeminence (John 1:15)
 - A. The final revelation brought by Jesus Christ (John 1:16-18)⁵

The Word's activity in creation (John 1:1-5)

The first phrase of the prologue, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1a), shows a parallel between the opening of the narrative and the biblical account of the beginnings of history in Genesis 1:1. Before the beginning of the history there was only God, but the author claims that even then ἦν ὁ λόγος (Brown, 1966:4).⁶ The λόγος preexists the history and ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν (John 1:1b). Its 'existence is placed outside the limits of time and place, neither of which existed ἐν ἀρχῇ' (Moloney,

⁵ Köstenberger (1999:57) agrees and adopts Culpepper's suggestion, suggesting a chiasmic structure in which John 1:12 is the center of attention. Seo (2007:16) outlines his chiasmic structure into seven units according to Christological themes:

- A - The Word was God (John 1:1-2)
 - B - In the Word was life (John 1:3-5)
 - C - Through the Word all men might believe (John 1:6-9)
 - D - To those who believed in the Word (John 1:10-14)
 - C' - This was He (John 1:15)
 - B' - Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:16-17).
 - A' - God the One and Only is at the Father's bosom (John 1:18).

Meanwhile, although it is probable that the author designed a chiasmic structure, some scholars, like Kim (2009:428) proposed the outline for the sake of the dividing passage according to a thematic analysis:

- A - The origin and nature of the Logos (John 1:1-5)
- B - The witness to the Logos (John 1:6-8)
- C - The manifestation of the Logos (John 1:9-13)
- D - The revelation of the Logos (John 1:14-18).

⁶ Brown (1966:4) argues that the word ἦν in John 1:1 conveys the notions of existence, relationship, and predication contrasting ἐγένετο in John 1:3, 6, and 14.



1998:35). The λόγος preexists for a relationship with God. From the start the author chose the Greek ὁ λόγος to express that from the intimacy of God a word will be spoken. The λόγος exists to say God's revelation. The term θεὸς is familiar to the reader or implied reader of the Johannine narrative as a reference to the God revealed in the Old Testament, and the θεὸς occurs in Genesis 1:1 to refer to the Creator. The author's favorite expression for θεὸς in his narrative is πατήρ of Jesus (John 1:14, 18; see Köstenberger, 2004:28).

The θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1c) places the compliment θεὸς before the verb ἦν and does not give it an article. This means that the author avoids saying that ὁ λόγος and θεὸς were one and the same thing.⁷ It indicates that ὁ λόγος and θεὸς keep their uniqueness, despite oneness due to their intimacy. Having distinguished ὁ λόγος from θεὸς, the author shows that they are God. Of course, calling ὁ λόγος God extended the boundaries of Jewish belief in Jehovah God (see Bauckham, 1998). It has been argued that John 1:1 identifies merely ὁ λόγος, 'Jesus as a god rather than as God because there is no definite article before θεὸς' (Köstenberger, 1999:29). However, this is unworthy discussion as Köstenberger explores for several reasons.⁸

The author uses a personal pronoun οὗτος for ὁ λόγος in John 1:2, while he essentially repeats what has already been claimed in John 1:1. Now the reader understands more of the contents of John 1:1, providing 'closure as well as preparing the reader for 1:3'. (Carson, 1991:118). Who might οὗτος be? The author insinuates an eventual revelation that will take place in history by means of a story told by ὁ λόγος. The author intends that his narrative shall be read in light of these first two verses (Barrett, 1978:156).⁹ So far he claims that as the incarnated λόγος, Jesus alone is God who has come to the world. No other can stand alongside Him or take His place. Jesus shares in the infinity of God. This does not mean that people cannot know Him, but they cannot have complete knowledge of Him. He must always be in the center of the believer's approach to God, his thinking about God, and his relating to God (John 14:6).

The author uses the aorist ἐγένετο in John 1:3 and the shift from the imperfect of ἦν (John 1:1-2) looks back to a time in the past when πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ (the Word) ἐγένετο. Moreover, οὐδὲ ἓν in creation took place without ὁ λόγος. The author conveyed that in the beginning the revealing act of creation took place through ὁ λόγος. Then he said, ὃ γέγονεν. The perfect tense indicates that the creation took place in the past, but the significance of its plot continues into the present.¹⁰

The λόγος speaks out of intimacy with God and makes God known, both in creation and in the presence of the λόγος itself in history. This revelation provides ἡ ζωὴ for which human beings need τὸ φῶς in John 1:4. The history of salvation is plotted from the preexistence of the λόγος to ἡ ζωὴ and τὸ φῶς brought into the history through the presence of the incarnated λόγος, Jesus

⁷ In terms of relationship, not only does πρὸς establish a relationship between ὁ λόγος and θεὸς, but it also distinguishes the two from each other (Brown, 1966:5, see also see Köstenberger, 2004:5).

⁸ After he states three reasons, Köstenberger (2004:28-29) continues: "Nevertheless, the force of the anarthrous θεὸς is probably not so much that of definiteness as that of quality: Jesus shared the essence of the Father, though they differed in person. Everything that can be said about God also can be said about the Word." MacLeod (2003:58-62) also argues strongly against the assertion Jesus is a god, surveying many scholars' theological, literary, and grammatical reasons.

⁹ Barret (1978:256) also states that "the deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous."

¹⁰ The emphasis of John 1:3 is to point to creation, not incarnation. The author asserts that πάντα ("everything in creation") owes its existence to ὁ λόγος (see Carson, 1991; Morris, 1995:71; Ridderbos, 1997:37).



(John 1:14). The author affirms that the revelation brought by the λόγος is coming into the world. According to Schnackenburg both ἡ ζωὴ and τὸ φῶς are universal religious terms (Schnackenburg, 1990:242–244), but Culpepper (1983:180–198) argues that they are rooted in Old Testament teaching. At creation, τὸ φῶς was God’s first creative act (Gen 1:3-5). Later, God placed lights in the sky to separate φῶς and σκοτία (Genesis 1:14-18; see Morris, 1995:74). The φῶς makes it possible for ζωὴ to exist. The author asserts that ἡ ζωὴ was in Him, ὁ λόγος who is the source of ζωὴ and φῶς.

The author tells that τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει in John 1:5a. He uses φαίνει, the present tense which means τὸ φῶς continues to be present despite ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.¹¹ The φῶς came when ὁ λόγος incarnated in the world and now shines (Ridderbos, 1997:39). Thus, the reader may recognize τὸ φῶς keeps shining in spite of the hostile reception it received. The author speaks of how human beings respond to the revelation of God that takes place in the λόγος, Jesus Christ. The σκοτία is the world estranged from God in Johannine narrative, spiritually ignorant and blind dominated by Satan (Schnackenburg, 1990:245.)

It is evident that John used the opening verses of his narrative to firmly set in place the Christological planks of the framework for a worldview. As the incarnated λόγος, Jesus Christ is God, and He created all things. To reject this worldview is to choose darkness. Those who choose darkness do not want Christ as their Creator and Sovereign.

John’s witness concerning the light (John 1:6-8)

The author gives a more narrative description of the figure and role of John the Baptist in John 1:6-8. Although many scholars consider it a secondary addition to the prologue, this section is essential to the prologue’s structure and message. As the λόγος’s involvement in the events of history is found in John 1:3-5, the author continues to introduce another historical figure who ἐγένετο the narrative (John 1:6). John the Baptist was not just any man, as we can see from the narrator’s point that ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ. This phrase, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ is reminiscent of the ‘Old Testament description of a prophet’ whose ‘role was a spokesperson for God’ (Brown, 1966:8). This is a very unique claim, since nobody else in Johannine narrative is described as having been sent by God except Jesus. It is thus God’s plan that μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ (John 1:7). Because of his testimony people might come to believe through the ζωὴ giving presence of the φῶς, Jesus Christ.¹² Through the λόγος, all things were created (John 1:3). Now it is God’s purpose that people might believe through John the Baptist’s testimony (Brown, 1966:8-9; see also Carson, 1991:121; Barrett, 1978:159).

Köstenberger states well in regard to the witnesses, “This role of eyewitness is both vital and humble. It is vital because eyewitnesses are required to establish the truthfulness of certain facts. Yet it is humble because the eyewitness is not the center of attention. Rather, eyewitness must testify truthfully to what they have seen and heard – no more and no less. The Baptist fulfilled this task with distinction” (Köstenberger, 2004:33).

John the Baptist was not the light, but ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός (John 1:8). His role was to

¹¹ The translation “overcome” of the verb κατέλαβεν would be better than “understood,” as asserted by many scholars such as Morris (1995) Moloney (1998), and Schnackenburg (1990). Carson (1991:138) thinks the author might have both meanings in mind.

¹² Although it is not actual ultimate outcome, the desired result of John the Baptist’s witness is that all might believe in Jesus (see Barrett, 1978:159; Carson, 1991:121).



give a witness to the light. Therefore, the reader must not be confused. John the Baptist was a great man, but he was not the light. While he is cast in a positive light as a witness to Jesus, John the Baptist is not the light, but rather a lamp (John 5:35; see Brown, 1966:28; Morris, 1995:81; Ridderbos, 1997:42; Keener, 2003:393). Moloney (1998:37) states: “The Prologue is now firmly anchored in history and, like vv. 1-5, its second section (vv. 6-14) opens with a description of the Word and a careful separation of the role of the Baptist from the role of the Word.”

This section of the prologue has significance both theologically and practically. The author claims again Jesus alone is the true light of divine revelation. John the Baptist is a role model of a witness for Jesus. Dodd argues that a threefold schema in this section controls the subsequent sections of John 1 that deal with John the Baptist.¹³

The incarnation of the Word (John 1:9-14)

The author now states the incarnation of the λόγος, the true and authentic light who φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον in John 1:9.¹⁴ The author’s view of the human condition in his narrative is recapitulated in the term κόσμος. Smith explores that the author uses the term κόσμος as a virtual synonym for creation, πάντα (John 1:1, 10) with no negative connotation; however, κόσμος is neutral in John 1:10 where it simply signifies the place in which the λόγος was incarnated, it is positive in John 1:2 where God created the κόσμος through the λόγος, and it is negative where the κόσμος rejects the revelation in the incarnated λόγος, Jesus Christ (Smith, 1995:80–81).

As τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, Jesus is presented as the source of φῶς that enlightens people. The incarnation of the λόγος has been portrayed in the first section of the Prologue (John 1:1-5) and is reiterated here in John 1:9-10. This of course does not suggest the universal salvation of all people, because the author does not speak of internal illumination in the sense of special revelation, ‘but of external illumination in the sense of objective revelation requiring a response’ (see Brown, 1966:9; Köstenberger, 2004:35). Not all people accept the light, ‘though it was available to all through Jesus’ presence’ and His words (Borchert, 1996:113). The λόγος was in the world that has its existence through Him, (John 1:10), but ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. The author uses κόσμος seventy-eight times in his narrative. The term usually refers to sinful humanity (see John 3:16). The phrase ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον is used to describe ‘Jesus as the One who enters the world from the outside’ and returns to His place of ‘the presence of God the Father’ (Köstenberger, 1999:121-123; see John 13:1, 3; 14:12, 28; 16:28; 18:37).

In John 1:11, the author specifies the place and the people who have not known Him nor received Him. He came to τὰ ἴδια and οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν, and here the reader understands the meaning. Many in Israel, especially the Jewish religious leaders, οὐ παρέλαβον the λόγος, Jesus. They failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They rejected the light including all of the signs He performed which demonstrated His deity and messiahship. Schnackenburg argues that the author’s reference ‘is not to Jesus’ earthly ministry but to Israel’s history prior to the incarnation’ of Jesus (Schnackenburg, 1990:256).¹⁵ However, the reference is more likely anticipating the λόγος’s

¹³ First, John the Baptist was not the light in (John 1:19-27). Second, John came to give witness to the light (John 1:29-34). Third, through John’s agency all might become believers (John 1:35-37; see Dodd 1953:248–249).

¹⁴ Carson (1991:122) opines that ἀληθινόν in John 1:9 delivers a sense of fundamental ultima: in Jesus ‘God has revealed himself in an escalated, eschatological sense’.

¹⁵ Brown (1966:30) agrees with Schnackenburg, citing the parallel of Wisdom in 1 Enoch 42:2.



incarnation in John 1:14 (Culpepper, 1980:13-14; Carson, 1991:122; Ridderbos, 1997:43; Moloney, 1998:37). Anyway, the author underscores the irony of the world — His own people — rejecting the One through whom it was made. They reject ‘Jesus’ claim of equality with God and His revelation of the God the Father’ through the words He spoke and the signs He demonstrated. Brown points out, “The basic sin in John’s gospel is the failure to know and believe in Jesus” (Brown, 1966:10). The entire Johannine narrative is taken up with the story of the confrontation between the Jews and Jesus as it appears in narratives of the anonymous minor characters of John 4, 5, and 9.

The message of a negative response was found for the first time in John 1:5. However, the negative response from those to whom the λόγος came (John 1:11) is complemented by the positive response of others, and results of such a response (John 1:12-13). The author places the verbs λαμβάνω and πιστεύσω in parallel in John 1:12, ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. That is, to receive the λόγος means to believe His name. Comparing the rejection of the λόγος in John 1:5, 11, the right way of λαμβάνω the λόγος is to πιστεύσω in His name. The results of belief in the name of the λόγος are narrated in the past tense, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι. The authority given is not a promise but an achieved fact for those who receive and believe. The aorist verb γενέσθαι indicates that people do not have to wait for the end times to become God’s children. The authority to become God’s children is available now to the believers. It can be realized and confirmed.

God’s children οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς but ἐγεννήθησαν by God (John 1:13). ‘Spiritual birth is not the result of human initiative’ (Moloney, 1998:38), but ‘of a supernatural origin’ (Schnackenburg, 1990:263). The author expresses natural procreation in three different terms: αἱμάτων, σαρκὸς, and ἀνδρὸς. First, the opposite of being born of God is born by αἱμάτων. The natural descent renders a blood relationship. The author’s point is that being a child of God is not a result of blood relations, like a Jew who could simply presume to be a descendant of Abraham. Rather, by His sovereign grace it ‘must be sought and received from God on the basis of faith’ in Jesus, the Messiah (Borchert, 1996:118). Second, the natural descent renders the θελήματος σαρκὸς. It relates to what is physical/natural as opposed to what is spiritual/supernatural. Third, the natural descent renders θελήματος ἀνδρὸς. The reference to θελήματος ἀνδρὸς implies the Old Testament ‘concept of male headship, in the present context perhaps with reference to the initiative usually taken by the husband in sexual intercourse’ resulting in parental determination or will (Borchert, 1996:118).

The author gives his readers the opportunity to see the world in its rebellion, as illustrated in the Jews, εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτόν οὐ παρέλαβον (John 1:11). Having seen this rebellion, the readers of the Johannine community are challenged to receive and believe Him as they admit their sin and be saved.

Now, the author announces formally the incarnation of the λόγος in John 1:14; that the λόγος was coming into the world has already been mentioned in John 1:3-4, 9. Now it is thus restated, describing Him in whose name people must believe as μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός. While Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, God is the Father. The πατήρ is a more personal term than θεός. The author prefers πατήρ in referring to God in his narrative. As anyone who believes in Jesus becomes God’s children, Jesus taught his disciples to call God πατήρ as well (Matthew 6:9).

The preexistent λόγος who was intimately with God has now σὰρξ ἐγένετο. The σὰρξ denotes “all of human person in creaturely existence as distinct from God” (Ridderbos, 1997:49; see also Barret, 1978:164; Borchert, 1996:119). The ἐγένετο does not mean “change into” in the sense that



Jesus ceased to be God by becoming a human being (Köstenberger, 2004:40). Nor does it mean He “appeared human or even took on humanity” (Morris, 1995: 90-91).¹⁶ The narrator’s point is that God has now ‘chosen to be with His people in a more personal way than ever before’ (Carson, 1991:127). By emphasizing that Jesus σὰρξ ἐγένετο, John communicates and reveals God in the human form, the form in which He ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. The verb σκηνώω may be linked to the Hebrew verb *sakan* used of the dwelling of YHWH in Israel (Exodus 33:9; 40:34-35) and root of an important word in Judaism to speak of the resting of the *kabod* (glory) of YHWH over the tabernacle. In the New Testament it is used outside of this instance only in the Book of Revelation 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3. The phrase ‘suggests that in Jesus, God has come to take up residence among His people’ in a way more intimate than when He dwelt in the tabernacle. People now may ‘meet God and hear Him’ in the incarnated λόγος, Jesus, who took the place of the temple (Mowley, 1984:136).

By speak of “His dwelling,” the author points to the experience of the Johannine community that can declare to have observed, in Jesus, τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. It reveals that John saw, together with the believing community, the δόξα of God. The δόξα is a very important concept in the Johannine narrative, introduced by the author in the Prologue. In the Old Testament, the δόξα of God was said to dwell first in the tabernacle. As the author makes clear, the δόξα of God now has taken up residence among His people once again in Jesus. The author’s doxological point of view in his narrative is that Jesus’ supreme purpose is to bring glory to God, shown even in the anonymous characters in John 4, 5, and 9. As Jesus brings δόξα to God, δόξα also comes to Jesus. This ‘continues what was already true of Jesus prior to His coming’, for δόξα ‘characterized both Jesus’ eternal relationship with God’ (John 17:5; Carson, 1991:128), and His pre-incarnate state (John 12:41). While in the world, Jesus’ δόξα is manifested to His disciples through His signs (cf. John 2:11; Carson, 1991:128). What is seen is σὰρξ in the σὰρξ of Jesus Christ. The visibility of the σὰρξ is precisely the point. Of course, the reader sees the δόξα spiritually, but physical sight was also required. In the author’s word, unlike Thomas who needed to see for himself before he would believe, the fact that Jesus speaks to those who do not see yet are still able to come to believe demonstrates that people can believe without seeing (John 20:29). That said, people who must believe without seeing need the testimony of those who saw, which is the reason given by the author for having written his gospel.

The author asserted that that the λόγος and God have had an intimate relationship from the beginning of history (John 1:1-2), enabling him to proclaim that observing the incarnation of the λόγος was the same as seeing God’s revelation in history. Hegermann (1994:348) notes that the author defines the glory of the the λόγος who has become human by taking up the Old Testament conceptual pair “grace and truth” with which the nature of the glory of Jehovah is summarized.

The narrator than goes on to proclaim that the glory of God seen was δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός (John 1:14). The intimate relationship of the λόγος and God is now declared as that between the only begotten Son and Father, a relationship foundational for the Johannine narrative which is about to begin. The author, however, carefully maintains a distinction between the only begotten Son and the Father, as shown in John 1:1-2. Moloney (1998:39) opines: “The glory that the Son had with the Father before all time (cf. 17:5) is unknown and unknowable to the human situation (cf. 1:18). The author states that what the human story can see of the divine has been seen in the incarnation of the Word, the only Son from the Father.” Believers cannot see the δόξα of the Father in the Son, but rather δόξα ὡς.¹⁷ His δόξα fully reflects the δόξα of the Father.

¹⁶ However, Witherington (1995:55) suggests that Jesus took on humanity.

¹⁷ Ridderbos (1997:53; see also Schnackenburg 1990:270) renders ὡς as “in keeping with his nature as”,



The author adds the description of the incarnated λόγος, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (John 1:14b). The phrase πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας is a precise Greek equivalent of the phrase in the Old Testament Exodus 34:6, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” In this expression, both refer to God’s ‘covenant faithfulness to His people Israel’ (Laney, 1992:44). But it is also possible that the χάρις in the Prologue retains its original meaning of an undeserved favor. The reader or implied reader of the Johannine community has observed the visible manifestation of God, the incarnated λόγος, the only begotten Son from the Father, the fullness of the χάρις that is τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν. According to the author, God’s covenantal faithfulness found ultimate expression in God’s sending His only begotten Son, Jesus (Laney, 1992:44).

The δόξα is the shining of God’s character, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας which the Johannine community has seen in the incarnated λόγος, Jesus Christ, and in His life. It is intimately connected with His revelation. The author is directly alluding to the divine aspect of His being and to its revelation as such. When Jesus Himself says that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23), He is pointing to His own death and to His death understood as the revelatory event, Πάτερ, δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα (John 12:28a).

The last time the author uses the word δόξα in his narrative is in Jesus’ prayer in John 17, and again the reference is to Jesus’ disciples seeing His δόξα (John 17:24). Thus, Jesus’ disciples who have seen His δόξα in His public life in the world will see Him in His manifest δόξα in heaven. It will include the Johannine community and, of course, all believers.

John’s witness concerning the Word’s preeminence (John 1:15)

In John 1:15 the author turns to the witness of John the Baptist. The first description of the λόγος (John 1:1-2) comes to mind as John the Baptist proclaimed that ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος follows him in terms of the time sequence of events (John 1:15a), but, in terms of His place in God’s providence He ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν. John the Baptist explains how this could be happened, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν (John 1:15b).

John the Baptist serves as the prototype of the Old Testament prophetic witness to Jesus ‘which makes his testimony an integral part of the salvation history’ unfolded and described by the author (Brodie, 1993:143). In this regard, that Brodie states John the Baptist appears to be the embodiment of the Old Testament is ‘far from being an illogical interpolation’, but instead is altogether appropriate. ‘It is as though, when the incarnation finally arrived, full of covenant love, the OT stood up and cheered’ (Brodie, 1993:143).

John the Baptist was ‘six months older than Jesus’ (Luke 1:24, 26) and began his ministry before Jesus did’ (Luke 3:1-20;). Like much of Eastern culture, the Old Testament supports ‘the notion that rank and honor is tied to one’s age’ (Kruze, 2003:791); thus, even a six-month difference implied preeminence (Harrison, 1988:791). Because of John the Baptist’s age and earlier ministry, the author shows that Jesus was really πρῶτός him, and therefore legitimately to be honored above him.

John the Baptist may have simply intended to affirm that Jesus ἔμπροσθέν him. If so, he spoke better than he knew (Kruze, 2003:72). Interestingly, John the Baptist’s witness is anticipated here

while Brown (1966:13) renders it as “in the quality of”.



prior to its actual narration in John 1:19-34 (Ridderbos 1997:55).

The final revelation brought by Jesus Christ (John 1:16-18)

The author leads the readers to a final revelation of people's reception and response to the gift of the incarnated λόγος, Jesus Christ. To the readers of Johannine community, the author explains ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος (John 1:16). For the Johannine narrative the believers receive His πληρῶμα within their hearts. They receive a χάρις that completes a former χάρις.¹⁸ The πληρῶμα can be found in only the χάρις of God displayed in Jesus, 'whose purpose was to bring life abundantly' (John 10:10; Borchert, 1996:123).

The author explains these two graces and their relationship in John 1:17. These two graces have been special gifts of God to the salvation history. At first, God ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϊσέως ἐδόθη. Secondly, God gave another gift which is already mentioned in πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (John 1:14b) and χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος (John 1:16b) which is the truth. The two nouns, χάρις and ἀληθεία reappear in John 1:17b, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ἐγένετο in which they are joined by καὶ. The χάρις that is truth supersedes and completes the first χάρις given through Moses, and it διὰ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. The author portrays the incarnated λόγος, Jesus's coming, in terms of the giving of χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος, affirming that the 'grace given through Moses was replaced by the grace bestowed through Christ' (Mowvley, 1984:137). This does not mean to nullify the first χάρις, rather it respects it. The author claims that the first χάρις is now completed in the final χάρις of the truth that came through Jesus Christ. The incarnated λόγος, Jesus Christ, is now described as the perfection of God's gifts. The author tells the reader or implied reader πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας, the perfect grace is 'found in Jesus Christ. Jesus' ministry is superior to that of Moses' (Mowvley, 1984:137). However, the Jewish religious leaders such as the Pharisees, calling themselves disciples of Moses (John 9:28), are furiously against the author's claim. Jesus counters by noting says that Moses wrote of Him (John 5:46-47). Although the law is God's gracious revelation, it is not adequate as an instrument of the truth, the ultimate grace that came through Jesus Christ.

The author makes one more point before he turns to the narrative as he concludes the prologue. Although the Johannine community may claim to have seen the revelation of God's δόξα in the incarnated λόγος Jesus Christ (John 1:14), Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε (John 1:18a) since no one can see the face of God and live, as Moses and others in the Old Testament narratives learned. That is, no one except the One who has told the story of God's way ἐξηγήσατο, and is μονογενῆς Θεός. The incarnation of λόγος is not fatal to those who saw Jesus because God is manifested in flesh. The glory that was hidden in the cloud in the Old Testament narratives remain hidden, now veiled in flesh, but the veil is of a kind that permits a visible form of revelation.

John 1:18 constitutes an *inclusio* with John. 1:1 (Keener, 2003:335-338). There it was said that the λόγος was with God and the λόγος was God. Here in John 1:18, it is similarly said that the μονογενῆς Son was God and that He was εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ Πατρὸς which is in the closest way possible He could be with God (Louw, 1968:38).

The reason human beings cannot see God is that God is spirit, and all human beings are sinners,

¹⁸ καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος has generally rendered the sense of "grace upon grace" by translating the proposition ἀντὶ as "upon," so its meaning of an abundance of grace. However, it has been questioned by some scholars, and Moloney, for example, renders χάρις as "a gift" that allows ἀντὶ to keep its meaning of "a gift in place of a gift" (see Moloney, 1998:46).



in direct contrast to God as holy and sinless. However, the incarnated λόγος, Jesus, is Himself God, and He became a human being so that people could see God in Him (John 1:14). Although He became a σὰρξ just as a human being, He was yet without sin and died for people so that their sinfulness no longer prevents them from having fellowship with God (John 1:29). As the author shows later in his narrative, Jesus' claim of deity brought Him into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. This results in His crucifixion under the charge of blasphemy (John 19:7).

Bauckham (2015:50) summarizes well this last section of the prologue in which the author presents the incarnated λόγος, the Son Jesus Christ as "the eschatological fulfillment of the Sinai covenant, a revelation of glory that fulfills the Sinai covenant by qualitative surpassing it."

The author conveys that the incarnated λόγος, the Son of God, will focus on the Father throughout his narrative to follow. The preexistent relationship between λόγος, the Son Jesus Christ, and God is continually εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ Πατρὸς. This relationship is presented as the very 'important reason' why the incarnated λόγος 'was able to overcome' the immeasurable chasm that had existed between God and man up to that point despite the law. This utmost intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father enabled Him to reveal the Father in an unprecedented way (Brown, 1966:36).

Köstenberger (2004:50) states that the author makes the important point that the entire narrative to follow 'should be read as an account of Jesus "telling the whole story" of God the Father' as he concludes the Prologue.

Conclusion

The author of the Johannine narrative in his opening prologue sets for a range of theological point of views, consisting of mainly Christological themes such as λόγος preexisted creation with God, becomes flesh, the incarnation of God, equality with God but personal distinction between them, the ultimate intimacy in relationship with God the Father, the true light of divine revelation and the Savior of the world.

The One of the purposes of the prologue is to indicate to the readers how they should read the life story of Jesus within a context that begins with the Old Testament, as seen with the near literal repeating of the opening words of Genesis in the gospel of John. The author presents the incarnation of the λόγος Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of the Mosaic covenant, a revelation of glory that fulfills it unprecedentedly. He affirms that the Johannine community has access to the perfection of the former gift. They can see the revelation of the glory in His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, the reader can also see the author's doxological point of view in the midst of his Christological themes. With the prologue the author wants to make clear that God has been made known in and through Jesus Christ. "Only the Son, Jesus Christ has ever seen God, and the story of His life will tell the story of God's loving action within the human history" (Moloney, 1988:41). Culpepper comments with regard to the relationship to the rest of the narrative, "In the Prologue, the narrator speaks, introducing the reader to the protagonist (Jesus), clarifying His origin and identity, and foreshadowing the plot and the themes of the story, that is about to be told." (Culpepper, 1998: 116-17).

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