



Readings: John 2:1-6; John 1:1-5 & 9-18

John 2:1-6

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

⁴ 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'

⁵ His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres.

John 1:1-5 & 9-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."') ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

INTRODUCTION: What are the six stone water jars about?

Between 480 & 720 litres of wine (between 640 & 960 bottles)

Extraordinary – the first miracle (sign, pointer, clue, hint)

Something undeniably flippant ...

Similarities between Genesis 1 & 2 and John 1 & 2

- 'In the beginning ...'

- ‘God said ...’ (Genesis) ... ‘the Word’ (John)
- turning water into planet (Genesis) ... turning water into wine (John)

But there’s more, far more, as we will see as we dig deeper.

There’s a profound message in those water jars – we’ll see it later in this series ...

AN EXEGESIS OF John 1:1-5 & 9-18

1 the ‘eternal pre-existence’ of Jesus

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.*

An apparent contradiction between 2 words – ‘with’ & ‘was’

- ‘with’ = the Word is a distinct person, distinguishable from God, enjoying a personal relationship with God
- ‘was’ = the Word is fully (clear statement) and eternally (implied by ‘in the beginning’ i.e. before anything existed, the Word did. Why? Because the Word *was* God).

In Jesus the Word is personified; so the Word becomes a title for God’s ultimate self-disclosure.

God’s Word in the Old Testament is his powerful self-expression in creation, revelation and salvation

The Word does not by himself make up the entire godhead; nevertheless, the divinity that belongs to the rest of the godhead belongs also to him (Trasker)

*The Word was **with** God, God’s eternal fellow; the Word **was** God, God’s own self. (Clowney)*

John intends his whole gospel to be read in the light of this verse: the words and works of Jesus are the words and works of God.

The remainder of the NT agrees:

Paul, writing of his own people, the Jews, says ...

*Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of **the Messiah, who is God over all**, forever praised! Amen.* Romans 9:3b-5*

*Christ Jesus: ⁶ **Who, being in very nature God** ... Philippians 2:5-6*

¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or*

powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
Colossians 1:15-20

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1:3

Also note the cry of the NT: 'Jesus is Lord'

Today, as then, THE baseline test of Christian orthodoxy is your answer to the question: 'Is Jesus, the son of Mary and (as was supposed) Joseph, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the itinerant miracle-maker of Galilee, the victim of Calvary ... God, as demonstrated by his Resurrection and Ascension, and as designated by the titles 'kurios' (Lord) and 'Christos' (King)?'

Yes or No ...?

That's why St Paul will allow no definition, understanding or portrayal of the name 'God' separate from his designation as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'

2 Jesus the architect and agent of Creation

³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

Again, this is consistent with the rest of the NT

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
Colossians 1:15-20

Why is it so significant that Jesus is revealed as Creator?

Because that is, for the Jewish scripture, the supreme expression of God's nature
In Genesis 1:1-3, it is

- the Father who speaks forth life ('God said ...')
- the Spirit who broods or hovers over the darkness and the water and the void (all word-pictures of chaos) and brings forth order ...

For the NT writers, revisiting their theology (study of God's nature) in light of their experience of Jesus, it becomes appropriate to ascribe to him that defining role.

These writers are unconcerned with the mechanics of creation – they are not asking who was assigned the butterfly and who the supernova ... they are simply concerned to say that whatever we once believed of God, we now know to be true of Jesus ...

It's also important that

- the One who created life also redeemed us from death
- the One who breathed into dust to create Adam, humankind, also breathed out his final breath to win for us the right to live beyond our return to dust

The link between creation and re-creation is deeply significant, not least (as we shall see) when it comes to John's assertion that new birth, salvation, re-creation is the gift of Jesus ...

3 Jesus as light and life ...

⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Light and Life are almost universal religious symbols ...

The self-existing life of the word was so dispensed at Creation that it became the light of the human race ('ton anthropon' = human beings) (Carson)

They are also key symbols for Jesus, as recorded by John:

'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

'...I am the light of the world.' John 9:5

... 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?' John 11:25-26

'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'
John 14:6

Darkness is also a powerful symbol, universally representing the powers of evil:

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:2

In some, dualistic religions / spiritualities,

- light & darkness
- good & evil
- life & death

are viewed as matched opposites, constantly duelling & battling, neither able to gain supremacy – hence the chaos on earth which is where this battle is played out.

Jewish & Christian tradition has similarities, but one major distinctive – light and life WIN!!

‘Darkness’ in John’s gospel almost always refers to personified evil ...

Light is not simply about creation (without light life cannot exist) not about revelation (in terms of illumination); but about salvation – the light wins ...

QUESTIONS

1. How can we grasp truth for which we have no experience or even adequate language
 - e.g. that the person we know as Jesus is both distinct from and in relationship with, and also the same person as, God?
 - e.g. that the person we know as Jesus existed before anything or anyone existed?
2. How should these convictions about Jesus shape our worship?
3. Why is it significant to believe that Jesus is the architect and agent of creation?
4. What is the link between initial creation and re-creation (new birth, salvation) achieved by the cross?
5. Talk about Jesus as the source of light and life? What does this mean for you?

Paul Langham, June 2017