

Fellowship and the Word (Christ)

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"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:1-5).

These verses set forth the beginning of the gospel through the apostle John. They reflect the beginning of the revelation of God in Genesis 1:1: **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** Time goes back no further than this statement. "In the beginning" comprehends everything "created" by God as TIME began.

"In the beginning was the Word . . ." The *Word* refers to Christ before he came to this earth. "In the beginning WAS the Word" signifies that the *Word* existed before the creation of anything. From all eternity the Word existed. He was not created. He created all things: ". . . and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). This tells us that the *Word* existed from all eternity.

These are the facts stated in these verses:

1. The Word WAS in the beginning before anything was created.
2. The Word WAS with God.
3. The Word WAS God.
4. The Word WAS in the beginning With God.
5. All things were MADE (created) BY HIM (the Word).
6. Nothing was MADE (created) WITHOUT HIM (the Word).
7. In HIM (the Word) WAS LIFE.
8. The LIFE (the Word) was the light of men.
9. The LIGHT (the Word) shined in darkness (the world). See Jn 1:5-7.
10. Finally, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

These are facts stated in John 1:1-5,14. This inspired revelation describes Christ as being *In the beginning*: before time and creation began.

". . . and the Word was with God." The human mind is not able to fathom the profound and "God-breathed" statements about deity and the beginning of time. **"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"** (Hebrews 11:2). Who was "in the beginning" to witness what happened? To us it is a matter of **faith**. The facts are revealed for our faith, not our complete understanding. It is not possible for mortal man in his environment on earth, confined by time, to comprehend the things of the eternal spirit world while in the flesh. I do not understand eternity, either past or future. I just believe it is where time does not measure anything. When a hundred billion years have passed, we have no less time in eternity. In fact, in eternity time is not measured at all. The mind of man can not fully comprehend eternity because all things in his sphere of

reference are bounded by time, but we can believe it when we believe the Persons who dwell in eternity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Word (Logos) was WITH God in the beginning.

"And the Word was God." Every divine attribute of the Father is also characteristic of the Word (Jesus Christ). The limitless nature of deity does not allow the changes and contradictions of created humanity. The Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God. John 1:1 says the *Word* WAS God. Every characteristic of the Father is also characteristic of the *Word*, Jesus Christ. Genesis 1:24 says, **"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."** This language indicates a plurality of Persons of equal power and attributes designated by the term *God*. Yet the Father (God) is head of Christ (God). "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3)

Jesus Christ, the Word (Logos) was God as is the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is the image of the invisible God, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1: 15-17). He has been given all power in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). Jesus was and is fully and completely God as is the Father.

"The same was in the beginning with God" (Jn 1:2). By the same Spirit John wrote, **"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ** (1 John 1:1-3). The *Word* (Jesus Christ) was with the Father before the world was created.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). **"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made . . . "** (Psalm 33:6). The *Word* was intimately associated with the Father from eternity and shall be with Him in eternity following the end of time.

"All things" were created by and through the **Logos**, (Jesus Christ) and encompass every thing that was ever created in the absolute sense: all matter, all life, all heavens and earth. It is emphasized further by the inspired expression: **"and without him was not any thing made that was made."** Read again Colossians 1:15-17 and understand the relationship of the Word (Jesus Christ) to all creation. There is perfect harmony between the Persons of the Godhead in their relationship to each other and to the creation, as well as to the scheme of redemption.

What does all this have to do with fellowship with God and with one another? Much in every way. Bible Fellowship requires *a relationship, a common law or rule of conduct and effort, a common goal, a willing effort to work together in communion.*

Fellowship requires that two or more have a relationship essential to true fellowship. Such relationship requires a law or principle by which the two or more understand their harmonious responsibilities to their joint activity. It requires a task, goal, reward and law to which the two or more are equally obligated. It requires understanding and willingness on the part of each of the two or more involved to do the work, enjoy the blessings and reward of it, and complete submission to the law or rule from Jesus Christ.

What Is Fellowship?

The problems resulting from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the word "Fellowship" provide another potential division in the body of Christ. I am just observing from past history. By understanding the meaning of the original Greek word, as well as the English which translates it, one should be able to know what the Holy Spirit revealed about fellowship.

Fellow (metochos), "Properly an adjective, signifying sharing in, partaking of, is translated "partners" in Luke 5:7; "partakers" in Heb. 3:1,14; 6:4; 12:8; "fellows" in Heb. 1:9, of those who share in a heavenly calling, or have held, or will hold, a regal position in relation to the earthly, Messianic Kingdom" (*W E. Vine Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*).

Ship means the state of being. *Citizenship* means the state of being a citizen. *Fellow-citizen* means that two or more are jointly citizens. Since fellow means sharing, jointly participating, sharing in being fellows (Eph. 2:19).

Fellow-disciples (John 11:16).

Fellow-elder (1 Peter 5:1).

Fellow-heir (Heb. 11:9; 1 Peter 3:7; Eph. 3:6; Rom. 8:17).

Fellow-labourer (Philm. 1:1,24, Phil. 2:25; 1 Cor. 3:9; 3 John 1:8; 1 Thess. 3:2).

Fellow-member

Fellow-partner (Luke 5:7).

Fellow-prisoner (Rom. 16:7; Philm. 1:23; Col. 4:10).

Fellow-servant (Matt. 18:28-29,31,33; 24:49; servants of the Lord (Col. 1:7; 4:7; Rev. 6:11; of angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:9).

Fellow-soldier (Phil. 2:25; Philm. 1:2).

Fellow-work (Matt. 16:20; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 16:16; James 2:22).

Fellow-worker (Rom 16:21; Col. 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:9).

In all these words "fellow" signifies being partakers together of, sharing jointly. That is the sense of "having fellowship" with someone in something.

Areas of Fellowship

All fellowship is not in the same area. The fellowship of a husband and wife in providing a home and care for children is not the same as the fellowship of members of a baseball team. The work is different, they function in different areas, their goals are different, the organization is

different, and the law that governs the two operations is different. We have no trouble understanding that.

One may have fellowship (comradeship, jointly participating, sharing work and benefits) with another and have no reference whatever to God, Christ, the Bible, or the church. Two carpenters, belonging to the same labor union, work side by side day after day. They lift boards together and nail them up together. In the true sense of the work they are having fellowship with each other.

However, in Christ there is absolutely no fellowship with those who do not have fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ. Fellowship with God comes through our obedience to the gospel of Christ in a relationship with Him through the blood of Christ. We are reconciled unto God in one body by the cross. We are reconciled by the word of reconciliation, the gospel of Christ. No one has fellowship with the Divine Persons who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ. To maintain fellowship with the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, we must walk in the light, and continue to obey the word of God. This is an area where many do not understand what fellowship is and what it requires of members of the church.

Fellowship and Unity

Jehovah God and His Son Jesus Christ had perfect relationship in eternity, in the creation of everything, in the scheme of redemption, and will have perfect relationship in the resurrection of the dead, the judgment and in eternity.

Christ requires his disciples to be related to each other as ONE to have fellowship with the Persons of the Godhood. First, EACH individual redeemed by the Blood of Christ has fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This fellowship with God is made possible by the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ; in no other way can man be forgiven of his sins and reconciled to God. This is where his fellowship with God exists. NO ONE has fellowship with God without reconciliation with the Father through Christ.

Since fellowship with God comes through Christ, in obedience to the gospel, fellowship continues only as we continue in obedience to the truth of the gospel. When one turns from the doctrine of Christ, and turns to any other doctrine, he severs his fellowship with the Father and the Son. Some redefine and realign words to try to make their concept of fellowship compatible with the word of God. But the word is not subject to change or modification in any manner. Read Galatians 1:6-12. This is the nature of the pure gospel.

If one disciple is required to be obedient to the gospel in order to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, it necessarily follows that EVERY disciple must be obedient to the gospel in all that it teaches in order to have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Any way you look at it, fellowship requires men to be ONE with God and with each other. That requires more than believing that Jesus is Christ and being baptized. Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. He prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). He prayed for his apostles, but he also prayed for all disciples who would believe on him

through the word preached by the apostles. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23). There is no way one can read this and not believe that the disciples of Christ are not required to be ONE with the Father and Jesus Christ, and ONE with each other. *That is what it says!*

Jesus said his doctrine was not his own, but the Father's who sent him (John 7:16). Christ affirmed that the doctrine he taught was from the Father, and all that he did was from the Father. They are ONE (John 8:26-29). That message from God through Christ will necessarily make the believers ONE in their obedience to it.

Jesus said that the one who rejected him by rejecting his word would be judged by that word in eternity. He said: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50).

Just remember, Jesus taught that men must be ONE with the Father and the Son by the word (truth, gospel) in order to be ONE with each other. That ONENESS enables us to have fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other.

When men and women have fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, they have fellowship with each other. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7). We do not have fellowship to God unless we are walking in the light - the truth of the gospel. 1 John 1:5 says: "This then is the message which we declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness." To walk in the light is to walk in Christ, who is the light of the world (John 1:4, 8-9).

Fellowship is the calling of God through Christ. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). This calling is accomplished by the gospel. "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). That means that fellowship with God and with the saints is by the calling of the gospel of Christ, which requires our obedience to it.

Fellowship and *unity* are inseparable. One necessarily involves the other. We are admonished to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-5). To walk together in unity produces peace.

Fellowship with men can never exist until and unless we have fellowship with God through Christ.

1 John 1:1: "That which was from the beginning" is that which the apostles heard, saw, looked upon, and handled, He is "the Word of life." 1 John 1:3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." All that John had declared was necessary to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. One cannot just declare himself "in fellowship" with God and it be so. John wrote that all he had declared was essential in order to have fellowship with the apostles and with the Father and the Son. The purpose of preaching the gospel John received is "that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Fellowship of the saints is only obtained through hearing, believing and obeying the gospel preached by them.

John is not saying that we may receive certain parts of truth as we want it, while other parts of the inspired gospel are not essential to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and other disciples. The full gospel must be preached and obeyed to be saved, and thus have fellowship with the Divine Persons as well as all other true disciples who obey the simple gospel in its fullness. The whole counsel of God must be preached and obeyed. This inspired record to be preached includes the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth (Rom. 1:16). That includes the Jew and the Gentile: all nations for all times. Obedience to the truth demands more than just being baptized. It includes all that is necessary to become a Christian, as well as all that is necessary to continue as a Christian. One who goes back to the world can have no fellowship with God, Christ or any of his disciples. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized . . . And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

"Walking in the light" is essential to having fellowship with God and His Son as well as other faithful brethren (1 John 1:7). "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), is the message declared by inspiration. Since we have seen that "God" includes Jesus Christ as well as the Father, and Christ gave the message of truth, which is light, to walk in the light is to walk in the truth from Christ. Christ is the light of the world. He was that Light: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:8-9). "The message" the apostles received from Christ declared that "God is light." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). Therefore, we understand that as Christ is the light of the world, his gospel, which the power of God to save, is the light in which we must walk (live) in order to have fellowship with Him. If one sins after becoming a Christian, he must repent and confess his sins and pray God for forgiveness. If he refuses to do that, he continues to be in his sins and walks in darkness; such have no fellowship with God. Walking "in the light" includes love of the brethren and excludes love of the world to every degree.

We are with God when we keep his commandments. We are away from God when we sin in any form. We **know** Jesus Christ when we keep his commandments (1 John 2:3).

More later . . .