

The Word in John 1:1-5

In recent decades a significant number of theologians have demonstrated that John 1:1 speaks of only one person, namely the Father, and that 'the Word' is not a person, not Jesus Christ ; but is, in fact, God's word that brought forth the Genesis creation as in Psalm 33:6 "By the **word** of Jehovah the heavens were made." This is just as Genesis chapter one describes how God spoke the creation into existence by His word. The Hebrew word 'davar', the Aramaic term 'Memra' and the Greek 'logos' mean more than simply 'word', but speak of God's self-revelation, His self-expression.

The many lexicons show 'logos' variously to mean: utterance, command, decree, plan expression of mind, creative thought, purpose, promise, message, wisdom, or reason. 'Word' is an inadequate translation of 'logos' because 'logos' encompasses 'Thought', 'Speech', and 'Action'. So the phrases '**God's creative thoughts expressed into activity**', '**God's expressed / decreed purpose or plan.**' '**God's commanded purpose**', or similar phrases more adequately reflect the meaning of 'logos'. So John, in typical Jewish fashion, spoke of God's **Grand Design** in His mind.

A great help to our understanding is found in the prologue of John's first letter which is a partial commentary on the prologue of his Gospel. From 1John1:1-3 we learn that, 'the word' is God's decreed purpose or promise to bring eternal life or 'life of the coming age.' So the impersonal promise, declared purpose or planned expressive activity is "**what** was from the beginning, **what** we have heard, **what** we have seen...concerning the word of life...and the life was manifested" becoming 'visible' so that the disciples could see and touch it , that is when "the decreed purpose to bring about life of the coming age, became flesh." This was just as when the 'word' i.e. God's self expressed actions brought about the original creation.

John 1:1-5 shows **no conversations between God and 'the word'** like those that are recorded between God and Jesus. This further demonstrates the impersonality of 'the word.'

When a literary piece is poetic, as John's prologue is it is generally given to metaphorical interpretation, which in this case is the figurative language of **personification**.

*Roger Haight Jesuit scholar explains: "Hypostatization means making an idea or a concept into a real thing...the symbols Wisdom, Word, and Spirit, which are found in the Jewish scriptures and refer to God, are not hypostatizations but personifications...A major development occurred when a **personification** became transformed into hypostatization." p257. 'Jesus Symbol of God'*

The personification in John's prologue is appropriate because his sources were Hebrew /Aramaic literature where personification was freely used. For instance, the Hebrew term 'dabar' translated 'word' is often personified in the Hebrew Scriptures ("With speed his word runs" Psalm 147:15).

*So a personified impersonal logos was not a new idea to John or his readers. Additionally 'logos' although grammatically of masculine gender in Greek does **not mean that it is actually sexually masculine when translated into English**. This is just the same as when a French masculine or feminine noun is logically neuter when translated into English.*

The Greek word logos appears in the LXX OT some 1500 times and is never used of a literal person. It also appears over 300 hundred times in the Christian scriptures and is only capitalized as a person in John 1 (but legitimately in Rev 19:13). As Dr. Colin Brown of Fuller Seminary comments: "To read John 1:1 as if it means 'In the beginning was the Son' is patently

wrong." Also Professor of Theology at Heidelberg H.H. Wendt says: "We should not argue from Philo's meaning of 'word' as a...pre-existing personality."

Further, Professor of Divinity James Dunn says "in the earlier stages of the poem we are still dealing with the Wisdom...not as a personal being, but as the wise utterance of God **personified**"

And again Roger Haight says: "One thing is certain, the Prologue of John does not represent direct descriptive knowledge of a divine entity or being called Word, who descended and became a human being. To read **a metaphor** as literal speech is misinterpretation;..."

This was the view of some of the early church fathers: Origen's commentary on John says: "logos - only in the sense of the utterance of the Father which came to expression in a Son when Jesus was conceived." Tertullian (155-230) translates 'logos' as 'speech' and states: "It is the simple use of our people to say [of John 1] that the word of revelation was with God." This view survived in Spain and southern Gaul until at least the 7th century.

Regarding translations; prior to the 1611 KJV, seven major translations used a small "w" for word and there are numerous translations since 1611 that reflect the fact that a second person is not being spoken about here e.g. Concordant, Diaglott, the 1985 translation by the Jewish historian Hugh J Schonfield and the 1993 translation by Robert W. Funk. The Elberfelder and Luther bibles have 'Das Wort' ('Das' being neuter and a capital letter being standard for all nouns in German) and the French Segond version has 'La parole' (feminine) and in Russian it is 'slovo...en bylo'(neuter).

Modern English examples are:

"At the beginning God expressed Himself. **That personal expression**, that word, was with God and was God..." J.B Philips.

"In the beginning was the purpose, **the purpose in the mind of God**, the purpose which was God's own being...this purpose took human form in Jesus "

G. B. Caird. New Testament Theology

"In the beginning there was **the divine word and wisdom**. The divine word and wisdom were there with God. **It** was there with God from the beginning. Everything came to be by means of it.." Robert Funk

From the above it seems that an appropriate rendering of verse 1a could be:

Verse 1a. "In the beginning was the Decreed Purpose and the Purpose was with God".

Noteworthy, is the fact that the poem is arranged in what is called 'staircase parallelism' form in which the last word of one phrase becomes the first word of the next finally rising to the climax.

Below are given further translation comments on verse 1.

Verse 1b "and the Decreed Purpose was CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD"

Grammatically this can be translated. '**the word was god**' or 'the word was godlike (of the very nature and character of God or 'divine')' "Lack of a definite article signifies predication rather

than identification' (NAB notes). Predication means to state as a **property of or attribute of the subject**.

Philip Harner's article entitled '**Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns**' states that "anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb [of which the second occurrence of *theos* in John 1:1 is an example] may function primarily to express **the nature or character of the subject**.....that the **qualitative force** of the predicate is so prominent that the noun cannot be regarded as definite." Dana and Manty's *Manual Grammar of the Greek N.T* makes the same points as does the UBS Handbook Series which says: "Since 'God' does not have the article preceding it, 'God' is clearly the predicate and 'the Word' is the subject. This means that 'God' here is the equivalent of an adjective, and this justifies the rendering "**the Word was the same as God.**" The following translations reflect this grammatical point:

"the Word was with God and shared his nature." The Translator's Translation

"and what God was, the Word was" Revised English Bible

"the nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God" Barclay

"the Word was divine" Moffatt, also Smith and Goodspeed

There is no justification for capitalizing in the phrase "**the Word was God**" as if identifying a second person, namely, 'the Word' as God. The Greek does not read as 'the Word was the God.' Knowledgeable Trinitarians also recognize that a one-one identity is incorrect because it destroys the unitary monotheism of the scriptures. "For us there is but one God, the Father." 1Cor 8:6. Also John 17:1,3

With reference to the translation 'a god', "Such a rendering is a frightful mistranslation" according to the foremost of biblical Greek scholars - Bruce M Metzger.

Although 'word for word' it is correct, yet grammatically and as a translation it is incorrect because it fails to reflect the purely qualitative aspect of the phrase. The overwhelming majority of scholars who have addressed this subject understand John to be emphasizing the qualities or character of the Logos and not an identity as a second god. Prior to Phillip B. Harner's study of qualitative anarthrous predicate nouns, "**qualitative**" nouns were viewed more or less as "**indefinite**" nouns. Harner found that 80% are qualitative and 20% are "**definite**" and none are exclusively indefinite. Since then Paul Dixon has shown that of the three semantic forces, namely, the definite, the indefinite and the qualitative **only one of these three** is John's intended meaning. Don Hartley took this further in his studies concluding that qualitiveness is a valid semantic category apart from definiteness or indefiniteness. He notes that from the standpoint of pure analysis, THEOS in John 1:1c is most likely qualitative.

The problem with the rendering 'a god' is that it is mixing the categories of 'qualitiveness' with that of 'indefiniteness' to produce an identity – a second god; whereas the above facts show that John is giving a purely 'qualitative' nuance.

NOTE: The often quoted Jason BeDuhn, as in favour of the rendering 'a god', has his PhD in Comparative Religious studies, not in Biblical languages and, unlike the above mentioned scholars, is not recognized in the scholarly community as an expert in Biblical Greek, although his degree does require an intermediate level of competence in Greek.

Further if John had wanted to say 'divine' he could have used the Greek adjective 'theios. Yet 'divine' does express the above meaning, though rather weakly. Qualitative anarthrous predicate

nouns provide a meaning significantly stronger than an adjective alone. Nevertheless, if 'divine' is used, as with Moffatt, and Goodspeed it does not mean 'divine being' but only the quality of divinity.

Appropriate renderings are: "the word was part of God", "the word was of the nature of God", "the word pertained to God", "the word was characteristic of God", "the word was expressive of God"

THE BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING.

God's 'logos' is impersonal in vss 1-5. The vocabulary is largely derived from the theological language of the Aramaic Targumim in common use in the first century.

Memra; to speak', is the Targumic reference to God's activity of commanding, therefore memra (Aramaic), dabar (Hebrew), logos (Greek) = **God's decreed purpose**. This is the subject of the opening lines in vss 1,3, 10,14

The prologue maintains the distinction between the logos and Jesus throughout with Jesus not being directly mentioned until vs 17 but with indirect references to him in vss 9,11,14

IT IS GOD'S LOGOS -- HIS DECREED PURPOSE

EXPRESSED IMPERSONALLY

Verses 1 and 2

"In the beginning was God's decreed purpose (memra, dabar, logos), and the purpose was with God, and the purpose was characteristic of God. This was in the beginning with God.

This refers not directly to the Genesis creation, but to a time prior to that creation when God formed a purpose to produce humans as immortal beings. "In the beginning" also has soteriological overtones of the New Creation.(vs13)

The phrase "**was with God**" means it [the word] originates with Him as in Job 27:11 "That [knowledge] which is with the Almighty I shall not hide."

GOD'S DECREED PURPOSE BRINGS EVERYTHING INTO EXISTENCE INCLUDING HIS REVEALED TRUTH [light] THAT LEADS TO LIFE IN THE AGE TO COME

Verses 3 - 5

All things [the universe] came to be through it [God's decreed purpose], and without it nothing came to be that has come to be. In it was life [of the coming age] and the life was the light of men. The LIGHT [God's revealed truth] shines in the darkness (of lies from Satan in Eden), and the darkness did not overpower it. [Gen 3:15 and onward]"

Prior to the 1611 KJV and also in some modern translations 'autou' in vss 3, 4 is translated "IT" not "he." The use of the pronoun IT with reference to 'the word' is appropriate because the poem moves forward from impersonal to personification.

NOTE: Raymond Brown comments " the Greek word zoe (LIFE) never means natural life in John's writings" and that "The prologue is speaking of eternal life." That is life in the age to come

JESUS IN THE REST OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

Although John's gospel was written last it cannot be maintained, that whilst the other gospels and writings do not speak of pre-existence, that John is providing a new revelation as to who Jesus was. Jesus never changed the Jewish definition of what the Messiah was to be i.e. a descendant of David.

“We also see that there has been no evolution or change in the basic identity of Christianity’s founder. Peter, in conversation with Jesus in the 30’s A.D provides the creedal statement about Jesus as Messiah, Son of God. And John writing probably in the 90’s makes the same identity of Jesus the whole point of his gospel-writing. This should put an end to any theories of “progress” through the New Testament period...everything John included in his gospel was to demonstrate the Messiahship and sonship of Jesus.” *Anthony Buzzard*

John 20:31

"these things have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God....”

Rather than any pagan idea that Jesus had a past life as a divine being, John’s gospel was written to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, thereby maintaining harmony with the synoptic writers. In this very Gospel that is most quoted to prove pre-existence, John did not present Jesus’ sayings so that we would believe that he had a pre-human existence as God or an archangel. John is, however, unique in concentrating on the 'words' of Jesus (5:24, 8:31, 12:48).

THE TRANSLATION OF **JOHN 1:15 AND 30**

"The one behind me has advanced in front of me, because he **existed before** me” NWT

*Because Jesus was born 6 months after John was born this translation is used to prove that Jesus must have pre-existed. However, when we examine the Greek Interlinear it becomes evident that it is the **pre-eminent status of Jesus** that John speaks of. Also it concerns the time immediately prior to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and does not concern Jesus’ coming into existence as compared with John’s time of birth.*

Word for word from KIT:

“The one behind me coming in front of me has come to be, because **first** of me he **was**”

Literally:

"The one coming behind me has come to be in front of me, because he was **first** of me" or

“The one coming after me has moved ahead of me, because he was my **superior** (or chief).”

The Revised Version says: “because he is **first** (*protos – in rank*) in regard of me.”

Geneva Bible "He that cometh after me was before me: for he was **better** than I"

Diaglott "He who comes after me is in advance of me; for he is my **superior**"

Rotherham "He who after me was coming, before me hath advanced; because my **chief** he was"

This verse is about the importance of Jesus’ ministry as compared to the importance of John’s ministry since it would be Jesus who would be pre-eminent in bringing about the salvation of mankind. This verse makes no reference to Jesus’ birth as being after John’s birth but refers to Jesus’ superior ministry as beginning after John’s ministry began.

In the NWT **PROTOS** is variously translated: Top-ranking, **first (in the sense of rank)**, best one, principal (men/women/cities). It is generally translated chief or first (in rank).

Only for John 1:15, 30 has protos been translated as "**before**" in most translations. (Wigram's Greek Concordance shows how 'protos' is translated in its entirety.)

Most modern bibles rearrange the sentence structure to say:

"He who comes after me **ranks before** me, because he was (existed NASB) before me" ESV.

It makes no sense to say that someone has advanced in front of someone else simply because he existed before him; but it makes sense to say that even though John began his ministry 6 months before Jesus began his, Jesus has advanced in front of John because he is John's superior.

An appropriate paraphrase is:

"The one whose ministry started later than mine has advanced in front of me because he was my superior."

Other examples of Jesus outranking John:

Matthew 3:11 "the one coming after me is **stronger** than I am, whose sandal I am not **fit**...."

Mark 1:7 "After me someone **stronger** than I am is coming; I am not fit to stoop..."

John 1:27 The Baptist said: "the one coming behind me but the lace...I am not **worthy** to untie..."

MESSIAH'S GLORY IN JOHN 12:41

This verse is used in an attempt to prove either that Jesus is Jehovah (trinitarian) or that Jesus pre-existed with Jehovah in Isaiah's time (arian).

John 12:38 (quoting Isa 53:1):

"So that the word of Isaiah was fulfilled which he said: 'Jehovah who has put faith in the thing heard by us? And as for the arm of Jehovah to whom has it been revealed.'"

John 12:40 (quoting Isa 6:10):

"He has blinded their eyes and he has made their hearts hard, that they should not see..."

John 12:41:

"Isaiah said these things because **he saw his** (Messiah's) **glory** and he spoke about **him**."

Although all cross-reference bibles give Isa 6:1 "I got to see Jehovah sitting on a throne and His skirts were filling the temple" as the reference for John 12:41 because it is the closer verse to Isa 6:10 there is, however, no direct proof that this is the reference that John had in mind. It seems more likely that 12:41 is a reference to Isa 52:13 (the suffering servant) which connects with Isa 53:1. This is especially so given the context of John 12:41 which is that of the suffering servant's death (vs 32,33) and his glory (vs 23,28).

Isaiah 52:13:

"Behold my servant shall understand, and be exalted, and **glorified** (Gk 'doxasthesetai') exceedingly." *Septuagint.*

If Isaiah 6:1 is not the reference then there is no reference to Jehovah and therefore Jehovah is not associated with Jesus in John 12:41. If, however Isaiah 6:1 is the reference, then John applies Isaiah's vision of the glory of Jehovah to Jesus as the one through whom God's glory shines during his life of self-sacrificing love as the suffering servant described in both Isa 6 and 53 ("and spoke about him")

*The unbelief of the Jews is prophetic, making God's glory in the Messiah also prophetic and **future**. Therefore, this is not about an already literally existing Messiah with a pre-human glory, This may be similar to "Abraham rejoicing at the prospect of seeing my (Jesus') day, and **he saw it**" It is God's revelation of His glory through Jesus that has caused the blindness and hardness.*

THE ENIGMATIC AND FIGURATIVE STATEMENTS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Unlike the Synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John is written from the standpoint of Jesus' post-resurrection glory. It unifies the earth-based Jesus with the exalted "Christ". This is evident from the use of the literary devices of prolepsis and heterosis. Therefore, single texts from John cannot be used legitimately as proof texts for pre-existence. They must be seen in the light of the all the gospels.

In John almost all of the sayings of Jesus are given in obscure and figurative language. This should not surprise us because even in the synoptics more than one third of Jesus' teaching is in parables i.e figurative language. Raymond Brown states with reference to the fourth gospel that:

"Jesus frequently uses figurative language or metaphors to describe himself or to present his message."

*"These things I have spoken to you **in figurative language**" John 16:25 NASB ('figures of speech' NAB)*

*Regarding the fine shepherd in 10:6 John says "This **figure of speech** Jesus spoke to them"*

Just as Jesus speaks figuratively to Nicodemus about being 'born from above' but misunderstood by him to being literally born again so too the statements of the Son of Man in John's gospel of ascending to / descending from heaven are often figurative.

It is only a superficial or cursory reading of the following verses that seems to suggest Jesus' self-consciousness of a literal pre-existence; but when one understands Jewish ways of thinking i.e that the Jew would speak of future things as already existing in heaven, and would use numerous types of figures of speech, then one can draw out the real meaning.

SON OF MAN DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN

John 3:13

*"no man has ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven [i.e. has his origin in God] **the Son of man** (which is in heaven KJV)." 'Son of man' means the ideal or perfect human.. Did such a **human** literally come from heaven? The Adam Clarke Commentary says 'This seems a figurative expression for 'No one hath known the mysteries of the kingdom of God'*

The CONTEXT is that of the figurative statements made to Nicodemus and thereby indicating that vs 13 is also figurative. The NASV gives Deuteronomy 30:12 and Proverbs 30:3, 4 as cross-references to John 3 :13 giving similar figurative use of ascending/descending language

Deuteronomy 30:12

"It is not in heaven that you should say 'who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it...but the word is very near you...'"

*The phrase "has ascended" implies that the Son of man is, at that moment, in heaven. This can not be literally so, since Jesus is with Nicodemus. Also, Jesus had not, at that time, literally ascended. This is what he told Mary according to John 20:17. Jesus is, therefore, figuratively in heaven in **constant communication with his Father** as described in John 1:18. It is Jesus "who is in the bosom of the Father that has **explained him**." (note NIDNTT on John 3:13).*

Proverbs 30:3,4.

"The knowledge of the Most Holy one I do not know. Who has ascended to heaven that he may descend?" i.e. *bringing that knowledge down. Jesus therefore, acts as **Jacob's ladder** between heaven and earth for bringing down the "heavenly things" which Nicodemus fails to understand. These "heavenly things" are 'the mysteries of the kingdom of God' which are communicated to Jesus. In Ephesians 2:6 believers now have the similar status of being figuratively "seated in heavenly places."*

HE THAT COMES FROM ABOVE

John 3:31 and **8:23**

John 3:31 "He that comes is over all others...He that comes from heaven is over all others."

John 8:23

"You are from below. I am from above." *These statements simply mean that Jesus is from God, as the one who is commissioned by God. He is in the higher spiritual position compared to these Jews who do not think God's thoughts.*

It is the same as in John 3:3,7 where Jesus encourages Nicodemus to be "born from above" Rotherham, NAB, and Diaglott. The footnote in NWT says "Lit, 'should be generated from above'"

HE WHO COMES FROM GOD

John 16:28 and **13:3**

"I came out from the Father and have come into the world..."

*This does not mean that Jesus literally travelled from God to the earth, but rather that he was commissioned by God. 16:28 says: 'out I came **out of (ek)** the Father' KIT.*

CHRISTIANS COME FROM GOD YET DID NOT PRE-EXIST

John 8:47 'the one [**The ordinary believer**] being **out of (ek)** the God the sayings of the God is hearing.' KIT

*NWT gives 8:47 as "He that is **from God** listens to the sayings of God."*

*NJB gives "Whoever **comes from God** listens to the words of God; the reason why you do not listen is because you are not **from (ek) God**"*

*NAB, NIV give "Whoever **belongs to God** hears the words of God..."*

As believers are 'from God' - 'belong to God' - 'come from God' but do not travel from God to the earth; so in the same manner Jesus 'comes from', belongs to God and was commissioned by him. Also note the 'bread of life discourse', and John's baptism --as 'being from above'.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN

John 6:33

"For the bread of God is the one who comes (*present tense*) down from heaven"

6:38,42 "I have come down from heaven"

6:41,58 "I am the bread that came down from heaven"

6:51 "I am the living **bread** that **came down from heaven** ; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever ; and for a fact, the **bread** that I shall give is **my flesh** in behalf of the world."

*A **flesh body** did not descend from heaven because Jesus came into existence in Mary. See Matt 1:1,18 KIT*

*CONTEXT: nominal disciples were shocked at Jesus' **metaphor** of eating his flesh and blood. More shocking were the words that implied that Jesus was greater than Moses and was uniquely associated with God. Concerning God's miraculously feeding their ancestors with the manna at vs 31 Jesus says "He gave them bread from heaven to eat " Yet the manna was not literally sent from God's throne in heaven. At Exodus 16:4 Jehovah speaks **figuratively** of 'raining down bread for you from the heavens' but what happens in reality is "the layer of dew evaporated and here upon the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flaky thing upon the earth" Similarly, Jesus' 'coming down from heaven' means **his being God's provision for everlasting (permanent) life**, in contrast to the bread that came through Moses vs 32 the eating of which did not give them permanent life vs 49. There is a past and present aspect to it. Similar statements of things that figuratively 'come down from heaven' are found at:*

James 1:16

"Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father"

James 3:17 "the wisdom from above is...."

Luke 20: 4 "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" *meaning: did it originate with God ? Of course, there were no baptisms literally in heaven.*

THE ONE WHO HAS SEEN THE FATHER

John 6:46

"Not that any man has seen the father except he who is from God; this one has **seen** the Father"

CONTEXT: Vs 45 quotes Isa 54:13 " they will all be **taught by** Jehovah'. Everyone that has **heard from** the Father and has **learned** comes to me"

In Greek 'knowing' and 'seeing' are near synonyms. Kittel and Friedrich's Theological Dictionary of the NT. The Greek word used here 'eoraken' is from 'horao' = "to perceive or to become acquainted with by experience." E.g:

John 14:9. "He who has seen me **has seen** the Father"

John 12:45 "He who sees me **sees the One** who sent me

These cannot mean simply 'caught sight of' Jesus, but those who get to know Jesus get to know the Father.

Job 42:5 "In hearsay I have heard about you, but now my own eye does **see** you." *Job did not physically see God, yet after his experience he knew God far better than before.*

John 8:38 "What things I have **seen** with my Father I speak" = 'learned' *with my Father*

So, Jesus and true Christians can see (learn from) the Father figuratively with the eyes of faith by the study of scripture and experience; and thereby come to know him better.

PRE-EXISTENT GLORY

John 17:5

"So now you, Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that **I had** alongside you

before the world was". *The glory was alongside or with God as a scripturally stated promise to the Messiah*

*John Chapter 17 contains many **proleptic sayings**, (the prophetic past tense). That is future things anticipated, yet spoken of as if they are present reality. There is a switching in and out of the prolepsis which follows the pattern of prolepsis elsewhere in the scriptures.*

Examples of switching in and out of the proleptic sayings in the Scriptures:

Isaiah 53:5 "he **was** wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we **are** healed..." ESV

Isaiah 9:6 "For there **has been** a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule **will come to be** upon his shoulder..." *Meaning 'a child will be born' – future as in 'will come to be upon his shoulder'*

John 3:36 "He that exercises faith in the Son **has** everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son **will** not see life."

In John 17: 5 it was only the glory that proleptically pre-existed. It was the glory that Jesus, in full confidence, knew would be his after he was resurrected and exalted.

Note : Jesus doesn't say "give me back the glory I had.

Examples of proleptic sayings within John 17.

verse 10 "all things that are...yours, **are** mine and I **have been glorified** among them."

Jesus had yet to die and be resurrected before he would have God's things and be glorified.

verse 11 "I **am no longer** in the world." *He evidently still was until he died.*

verse 12 "When I **was** with them, I **used to** watch over them on account of your name..."

not one of them is **destroyed** except the son of destruction". *Judas, at this time, had not been destroyed.*

verse 18 "I also **sent** them forth into the world." *This was yet to happen at Pentecost.*

verse 22 "I **have given** them the *glory* that you **have given** me." *Such glory would not be theirs until the Kingdom comes. Similarly Romans 9:23 speaks of "Vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory."*

It is not possible that Jesus would be asking his Father for a past glory because glory comes with exaltation and Jesus' exaltation came after his life course of perfect obedience leading to his death. See OUTLINE 43 subheading '6.JESUS WAS EXALTED – HE WASN'T PREVIOUSLY PRE-EMINENT' giving Philippians 2:8, 9 and Colossians 1:18, 19 as verses that show that Jesus was "highly exalted" that he "might become pre-eminent"

"Among the Latin fathers and some Ethiopic Mss. there is support for the reading 'that glory which **was** with you,' reading 'een' = 'was,' instead of 'I had' " *from the Anchor Bible.*

In all of these texts Jesus speaks as though he were already living his future exalted life; because all these things had been promised by his Father and therefore, were certain of fulfilment. So, the glory that Jesus had...before the world was evidently was glory that was laid up for him as a deposit potentially his in God's plan. Matt 25:34 tells of the sheep who are directed to "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world".

Similarly, this glory and God's love vs 24 were prepared for him before the founding of the world.

THE JEWS BELIEVED IN IDEAL (NON-LITERAL) PRE-EXISTENCE

WHICH MEANS BEING FOREKNOWN

This means that God holds in mind a picture of what He intends to accomplish, how it will be accomplished and who will be involved; none of which things actually exist until their time. This is the Jewish way of thinking. The Greek word for pre-existence 'pro-uparchon' is never used in the scriptures.

Romans 4:17

"God...calls the things that are not as though they are." e.g. *Jeremiah was foreknown but did not literally pre-exist. Jeremiah 1:5. Also Romans 8:29;9:23; Ephesians 1:4*

Colossians 1:5 "**the hope** that is laid up for you in heaven" NASB

1Peter 1:4 "the unfading **inheritance**. It is reserved in the heavens for you."

Mark 11:24 "be having faith that you received, and it will be to you." KIT.

IDEAL PRE-EXISTENCE AS APPLIED TO THE MESSIAH

1Peter 1:20

"He (Jesus) was **foreknown** before the founding of the world but he was made manifest at the end of the times". *Christians are similarly foreknown:*

1Peter 1:1,2 "The ones chosen according to the foreknowledge of God"

Ephesians 1:4 "He chose us...before the founding of the world". *Christians did not literally pre-exist. To foreknow is the ability to know someone before they exist as with Jeremiah 1:5*

Revelation 13:8

"the scroll of life of the Lamb who was slaughtered, from the founding of the world"

word for word: "book of the life of the lamb the one having been slaughtered from the throwing down of the world." *Was the Lamb literally slaughtered before the foundation of the world? Rather he pre-existed in God's mind. (There is no comma in the Gk)*

Acts 2:23

"this man...delivered up by the determined council and **foreknowledge** of God." ('predetermined plan' NASB, 'determined purpose' NKJ)

MESSIAH IS SEEN IN DANIEL'S VISION

John 6:62

"What,...if you should see the **Son of man** ascending to where he was before?"

*This is a case of ideal / notional pre-existence i.e. being foreordained as shown in 1 Peter 1:20 and Acts 2:23. Could the ideal **human** have been in heaven before his birth? Jesus saw himself as fulfilling the "Son of man" (i.e. the human Messiah) program laid out in advance in the scriptures.*

"How is it **written of** the Son of man..." Mark 9:12.

"The Son of Man is to go just **as it is written** about him" Matt 26:24

*The place where the Son of Man's ascending is written about as part of the Messianic program is found in Daniel 7 where the human Messiah was seen (i.e. **before**) in heaven in the vision of verse 13 and hence of the future. If this verse is interpreted literally it would mean the impossible case of 'the Son of Man a mortal human had been in heaven.*

MESSIAH PRE-EXISTED ABRAHAM NOTIONALLY

John 8:58

"Before ABRAHAM came into existence *I have been*"

word for word :- KIT "Before Abraham to become I am" (Gk. *ego eimi*)

UBS "Before Abraham came into being I am"

A. *All other instances of this Greek phrase (ego eimi) are translated as "I am he" or "I am (he)" or "I am the one", see John 4:26, 8:24, 8:28, 9:9, 13:9, 18:5. This is recognized as correct by all scholars. There is no contextual reason to render 8:58 any differently. Only the Diaglott is consistent.*

*Edwin Freed comments: "Jesus is reported as affirming his messiahship through the use of 'ego eimi'" and that **John 4:26** is "the clue to understanding all other passages where the words 'ego eimi' occur."*

*So what did Jesus mean? In John 4:25, 26 the woman at the well says "I know that **Messiah** is coming" Jesus said to her: "I who am speaking to you **am he**".(ego eimi). So he is saying "I am he the **Messiah**". Hence in 8:58 he is telling them the same thing, that is, that he is the Messiah.*

B. *This is also a case of ideal / notional pre-existence i.e being foreordained as shown in 1 Peter 1:20 and Acts 2:23.*

The subject here in its immediate CONTEXT (8:53) is **who is the greater**, Abraham or Jesus-
- who takes precedence Abraham or the Messiah. The Jews ask: "Who do you claim to be." By pointing out that he is the Messiah THAT WAS PROMISED, he shows he is greater than Abraham.

The proof that only in this NOTIONAL SENSE DID JESUS PRE-EXIST ABRAHAM comes when Jesus says in:

8:56 "Abraham rejoiced greatly at the prospect of seeing my day and **he saw it** (through eyes of faith or possibly a vision) and rejoiced." So Abraham was privileged to see into the future –to Jesus' day. He looked forward and saw the coming Messiah before he came into history. So when Jesus says "Before Abraham came into being I am he" he is not making a statement about literal pre-existence, but simply claiming to be the One who was promised to come, which promise existed before Abraham was born and which Abraham was privileged to see in his mind – an ideal or notional pre-existence of Messiah.

The Jews, as ever, misunderstand and think that Jesus was meaning that he -- Jesus had seen Abraham (8:57), but Jesus is emphasizing that he takes precedence over Abraham because of his superior position in being the promised, **foreordained** Messiah notionally pre-existing "**before** Abraham came into being..."that is in the sense that **the planned Messiah was in God's mind** (Genesis 3:15).

J.A.T Robinson makes the point that "to say that Jesus is "before" him is not to lift him out of the ranks of humanity but to assert his unconditional precedence. To take such statements at the level of "flesh" so as to infer, as "the Jews" do that, at less than fifty, Jesus is claiming to have lived on this earth before Abraham (8:52 and 57), is to be as crass as Nicodemus who understands rebirth as an old man entering his mother's womb a second time (3:4)." p.384 of 'The Priority of John'

Similarly, as:

Revelation 13:8b states

"The lamb who was slaughtered from the founding of the world" *speaks not of a literal pre-existence but of foreordination. So, as the promised Messiah, Jesus existed in Jehovah's mind before Abraham was born.*

Note: even if 'I have been' was a correct translation (grammatically 'from the past to the present') it would refer to him as the Messiah i.e. "I have been he (the Messiah)." This, however, cannot mean literal but only notional (foreordained in God's mind) pre-existence because the Messiah, the Son of God came into existence at his conception. Luke 1:32,35

Recommended reading

The Priority of John by J.A.T Robinson

Born Before All Time? by Karl-Josef Kuschel