

“In the beginning” in Jn 1:1 Is Eternity Past; “What was from the beginning” in 1 Jn 1:1; the Use of Logos by Philo & John; John Heard & Saw the Logos

11. How can we get the extension of the translation “which was not a beginning” and contend that it refers to eternity past? An excellent explanation of this is provided by:

Yeager, Randolph O. *The Renaissance New Testament*. (Woodbridge, Va: Renaissance Press, 1979), 4:2-3:

God is not a creature who must consult watches, clocks, calendars or yardsticks or other space measuring devices. But we are. The human mind cannot grasp the concept of unlimited time and space without great difficulty. It is natural for us to speak of a point in time as “the beginning” before which there was no time and a point in space as “the beginning” beyond which there is nothing. Thus John accommodates his writing to our human limitations, but the Holy Spirit in inspirational guidance employs the imperfect tense in ἦν, *ēn* [of the verb εἶμι, *eimi*: “to be,” translated “was”] to transmit the thought with total clarity. John takes us back into the past unto a point which he arbitrarily calls “the beginning.”

John's point is found in his use of the imperfect tense of the verb εἶμι [*eimi*]: ἦν [*ēn*], an imperfect indicating progressive description in the past at some point which human beings choose to call “the beginning.” Since ἦν [*ēn*] transmits the concept of continuous existence in the past we can say that at a time point, arbitrarily referred to by creatures of time and space as “the beginning” the Word was already existing and had enjoyed this existence “before the beginning.” Had John used the present tense of εἶμι [*eimi*] (ἔστι [*esti*]) we would translate “In the beginning *is* the Word.” In other words the conclusion would be that the Word had His beginning at the same time that time began. This would deny the eternal character of the Word. What the text says so clearly and cleverly is that men ... can go back in history as far as they like, mark a time point and call that the beginning only to find that at that moment of *time* the Word had already been in a continuous state of being. Thus the Word existed *before* the beginning, since He has always existed. With Him there is no beginning. He is eternal and everlasting.

John uses the Philo's word (ὁ λόγος [*ho logos*]), by which the Gnostic philosopher from Alexandria identified the intermediary agent of creation, who stood between the non-material God and the material world. (p. 2)

For Philo ... God could have no active relationship with the material world. Thus, also, any religion that was based upon the central truth of an incarnation of God in human form, with His incarnate Deity involved, as Jesus was, in a series of time/space events, is a false religion.

How then did God create the world? Philo had to face this question since he was an orthodox Jew who accepted the Pentateuch [*sic*], which teaches clearly that God did in fact create the worlds. Philo was forced to say only that the world was a cosmos (κόσμος [*kosmos*]), i.e., an orderly world, governed wholly by that which is reasonable, which is to say natural law. This natural law God ordained in creation.

In their struggle to determine the origin of evil Philo and his disciples concluded that matter is evil, since God is both immaterial and good. That God, in the Person of His Son, whom the Christians called Jesus, could be material, was rejected by Philo. The Logos was a partaker of Deity and thus possessed His essence and must therefore be nonmaterial. Philo could agree with all that John wrote about ὁ λόγος [*ho logos*] in John 1:1-5, 9-13, but when John wrote in verse 14 that ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο [*ho logos sarx egeneto*] - “the Word became flesh” - he was committed to a view that neither Philo nor any of the Gnostics could accept. (p. 3) [See John 1:1-14]

12. In 1 John 1:1 *ap archē* does not refer to eternity past as John uses it in John 1:1. Here it points to a specific beginning with reference to the true humanity of the Christ: the First Advent beginning at the Virgin Birth.
13. The “what” that was “from the beginning” is Jesus Christ in His true humanity from the Virgin Birth through the crucifixion, i.e., the Incarnation.

14. During this 33-year period, Jesus did not rely on any of His divine attributes but rather on the assets imputed to Him in the prototype version of the unique spiritual life.
15. The argument that Jesus Christ possessed true humanity is sustained throughout John's epistle. John refutes Philo and his Gnostic counterparts who insisted that God could not take on human form when the human form was material and thus evil.
16. Other Gnostic ideas that developed was that the true humanity of Jesus was an optical illusion thus John bases his first argument on empirical knowledge he and other apostles and disciples possess from personal experience.
17. John begins a sequence of phrases beginning with the relative pronoun **ὃς, hos**, translated "What." As he moves through them he is describing sensual perception of the true human body of the Lord. He begins with His voice: "What we have heard."
18. The verb is the perfect active indicative of **ἀκούω, akouō**:
- perfect: Intensive: the action has reached its termination and John places the emphasis on the finished results: he heard the Lord speak both before and after the resurrection.
 - active: John and the other followers of Jesus produce the action of hearing the Lord speak.
 - indic.: A statement of fact that affirms the physical existence of the humanity of Christ.
19. This is the first in a series of comments that stresses empirical proof of the Lord's humanity. The Greeks developed their philosophies around the idea that deity could not be material and the Gnostics picked it up. John begins his polemic by using the sense of hearing.
20. This is important to stress because the Lord's ministry was built around His teachings all of which refuted the heresy of Gnosticism. John heard these teachings from the voice of Jesus.
21. The next verb with the pronoun *hos* is the perfect active indicative of **ὄρω, horaō** which means "to see." It, too, stresses the completed action of John having seen the true humanity of Jesus both prior to and following the resurrection: "What we have seen with our own eyes."