**Sacred Journey XXIII**

**The Godhead: Word – Logos - Wisdom**

**NIV John 1:1** 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 men.

We start with a brief explanation of “Logos.” “Logos” is Greek for “word.” The passage just offered, in Greek uses “logos” which is then translated as “word” in English. What is an interesting observation is that “Word”, as it is used here is capitalized! Why? Because “Word” is someone’s name. John assigned it as a title/name to Jesus.

"Logos" has long been an accepted Messianic title by Christians without dissension. It needs to be given a correct interpretation by both Christians and Jews by properly understanding its origin and meaning. In the very readable Tyndale New Testament Commentaries on the Gospel of John, R. V. G. Tasker, without ever even mentioning the word "logos," attempts to dissect and connect its meaning, by way of Old Testament passages, to the Hebrew word dabhar or davar which means "word". In fact, Tasker does not actually mention the word "logos" at all.” **R.V.G. Tasker. John: Tyndall New Testament Commentaries. William B Erdman's publishing Company, 1988, 41.**

While we lean toward the acceptability of this interpretive understanding, for our purposes we must make sure we do not limit our understanding when speaking of the origin of its meaning. Tasker rightly connects the "Word" or "Logos" with a person, a person being of and with God. **Ibid.**

In reference to the Hebrew for word, "dabhar" (pronounced dah-bar), Tasker wants us to understand that it is significant that "dabhar" is used for both "a word" and “an event", and that this usage is found in both the New and Old Testaments. **Ibid.,**

It would be good for us to keep this understanding in mind, that all three, “Logos, Word, and Wisdom” are verbs which are simultaneously interpreted as nouns. As we review their historical interpretive usage, we should keep the action connected with the title/name.

"It is the unique contribution of the prologue of the Gospel of John, that it reveals the Word of God not merely as an attribute of God, but as a distinct Person within the Godhead, dwelling with a Creator before creation began, and acting as the divine agent in creation. The prologue speaks not of ‘the word of God’ but of the “Word who was with God and was God.”” **Ibid., 42.** We could write it this way. “In the beginning was the Word, who is the word of God, who was with God and is God.”

What is not mentioned by Tasker is that prior to the time of Jesus, a whole theology of "logos" existed. Allegory was the mode of interpretation concerning the "logos." “One of the most important of hermeneutical consequents of Logos theology was a proclivity for allegory as a mode of interpretation.1 The concept of a Logos as both the site of absolute creativity as well as the revealer of absolute Truth, of Sophia, will promote allegory as a legitimate and choice mode of interpretation. Logos theology, which, as we shall see, is predicated on the notion of an Author, a speaker behind the written text, as well as a dual existence for language as signifier and signified, conduces to interpretation as a hermeneutic of depth. …The theology of "logos" was that he was both the source of absolute creativity and the revealer of absolute truth. To promote allegory as an interpretive approach was a legitimate and a choice mode of interpretation among Greeks. "Greek philosopher Origen (a Christian theologian,184 AD –253 AD) , and his Jewish Alexandrian predecessor, Philo (20 BC – 40 AD), both understood that a hermeneutic ungrounded in the "logos" was a source of disagreement within Judaism. [among the Judeans]." **Daniel Boyarin. "Philo, Origen, and the Rabbis on Divine Speech and Interpretation." The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Essays in Honor of David W. Johnson, James E Goebring and Janet A. Timbie, eds., (Washington: the Catholic University of America Press), 113.**

**Note:** “The ontology (about being, substance of being) of human language itself consists in its privileged pairing of its signifiers (word meanings) with the transcendental signified (looking outside and beyond word meanings) of the Logos. The move toward allegorical interpretation within Christian writing is thus both epistemologically and ontologically (theologically) grounded.” Ibid.,

Messiah Son of David as King and anointed priest, along with the term Son of Man were names given to some of the agents of God's activity by the Judeans. "Logos" is one of these terms along with its related Aramaic equivalent “Memra” which is viewed as a divine agent. Cairns. **Ibid., 71**

"Logos/Memra" is the allegorical equivalent and fulfillment of the preaching, or proclamation, of God's Word by God's agent, or even by God Himself.

"A major portion of Jesus’ ministry in the four Gospels is his preaching and teaching. To what extent the portrayal of him depends upon anyone of a variety of Jewish and Gentile models is a point of considerable dispute. Our discussion of the Jewish text, however, suggest some possibilities that need to be investigated. Since the Gospels interpret Jesus's death with reference to the tradition of the persecuted spokesman of God, it is plausible that some of their descriptions of Jesus’s preaching have also derived from the tradition. The accounts of Jesus's baptism are noteworthy in this respect, because the wording of a heavenly voice uses language from the Servant passage in Isaiah 42:1–2, and the stories serve as prologue to Jesus’ ‘spirit – prompted’ ministry.” **Nickelsburg, Ibid., 112.**

**Isaiah 42:1** "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets.

The Hebraic understanding is that the "Logos/Memra" refers to the Word of God. Nickelsburg sees John 1:1-18 as probably quoting a Jewish exposition of Genesis 1:1-5 identifying Jesus as the preexistent Word (Logos/Memra) at the very beginning of John's Gospel. **Ibid., 113.**

**Genesis 1:1-5** “ 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 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. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning-- the first day.”

“This Greek word (Logos) is seen to be endowed with a very Hebraic interpretive understanding. John's Gospel clearly connects the "Logos/Word" as being a divine other with God from the very beginning of creation, but existing before creation, because the "Logos/Word" was the creator. The "Logos" was the "Word" of God, meaning the one divine being known as the "Logos/Word" who spoke the word, or words of God. John's allegorical connection of the "Logos/Word" and the spoken Word of God was that they were one (echad) and the same (‘etzem). This way [pattern] of thinking is within the understanding of the Hebraic interpretive methods used by Jesus, his disciples, and the Judeans of his time. **Cairns, Ibid., 72**

“While this concept and interpretive approach is placed within these terms, it is foreign to the methods of Greco/Roman hermeneutics used by most Christians today. The Hebraic understanding is that "Logos/Word/Memra" was a name and title for the Divine Creator pre-existing His creating with God. The "Word of God" was this same divine being called the "Logos." Additionally, this understanding says that the spoken Word of God brings wisdom. “Wisdom” was connected to the “Word”, just as “Logos/Word/Memra” are connected, being a name for God and being God.” **Ibid.**

The Hebraic understanding of "Wisdom" also being divine is rooted in Proverbs 8:12-14, 22–23.

**Proverbs 8:12-14, 22-23** 12 "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. 13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. 14 Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power…. 22 "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; 23 I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.

“In the Old Testament and in other Second Temple Period Literature, "wisdom" is interpreted to be a divine heavenly figure”. **Nickelsburg, Ibid., 103.**

"That Jesus was thought to be the earthly presence of heavenly wisdom is attested to in several New Testament texts. Most briefly, it is stated in the hymns of Colossians 1:15–20,

**Colossians 1:15-20** 15 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by 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.”

and Hebrews 1:1-4, both of which emphasize his role in creation." **Ibid., 113.**

**Hebrews 1:1-4** “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”

“The Johannine hymn to the "Logos" was inspired, (John 1:1–18) in content and in form, generally at least, in hymns about a more personified “Wisdom”, such as those found in Proverbs 8 and Job 28:12-18.” **Cairns, Ibid., 73.**

**Job 28:12-18** 12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? 13 Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. 14 The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.' 15 It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. 16 It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. 17 Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. 18 Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies.”

"Logos" was "Word."

"Word" was "Wisdom"

"Wisdom" was God.

God dwelt in heaven.

"Logos," (in the thoughts of Judeans), dwelt in the heavens.

It follows that when John wrote his Gospel and declared, "In the beginning was the "Word – ‘Logos’," the Judeans of his time understood that John was calling Jesus the divine God who lived in heaven and was the creator of all things.

“In the first and second centuries, there were Jewish non-Christians who firmly held theological doctrines of the second God, variously called Logos, Memra. Sophia or Wisdom,…; indeed, perhaps most of the Jews did so at the time.” **Boyarin, Border Lines, 92.**

“The understanding of a "complexity within the Godhead" preexisted the time of Jesus within Judean faith. The ”Logos,” or second person in the Godhead, was known by several names, including the Aramaic term “Memra”, the Greek term “Sophia” or “Wisdom”, among others. “In the early centuries there were non-Christian Jews who believed in God's “Word”, “Wisdom”, or even “Son” as a "second God."” **Ibid., 90.**

The literary evidence, pre and post-incarnation of Jesus, speaks of a rich theological foundation of belief that God either existed as being more than one in Himself, or that there were more than one God in heaven. John applies the term "Logos" (Word) to Jesus. This rich Hebraic title, within itself, calls Jesus the pre-existent Divine Creator. The word “Logos” may be Greek, but its meaning is interpretively Hebraic. Jesus would draw from this rich Second Temple Period interpretive environment and give clarity to those ideas that more accurately reflect His person, nature and calling. In John 1:18, the apostle writes in His Gospel;

18 "No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known."

**John 1:1** 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 men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. 6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received 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, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.”