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# Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels

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Gospel. "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14) is typical, along with the surrounding sayings about a city on a hill (Mt 5:14), a light on a lampstand (Mt 5:15) and shining forth one's own light (Mt 5:16). The standard metaphorical usage of light is employed here: the light is the truth and goodness of Jesus' message that the disciples are responsible for spreading. The Synoptics also use "light" to accompany revelatory activity. The \*transfiguration (Mt 17:1-9 par.) involves imagery of light and brightness. Here, light accompanies the unveiling of Christ's identity. Similarly, note Luke 2:32, where Simeon declares Jesus to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles."

### 3. Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John is marked by its use of dualities, such as light/darkness, above/below and flesh/spirit. This sort of dualistic worldview reflects a belief in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. It is in John's Gospel that the metaphor of light and darkness reaches its full fruition in the NT. The metaphor begins in the prologue, where the concepts of "light" and "life" and \**logos* are tied closely together. Nearly every commentator notes the obvious echoing of Genesis 1, where it is said that light and life were created by the spoken word. In John's prologue, foreshadowing the rest of this Gospel, the \*incarnate Word brings true light and life, concepts that are regularly paired and equated. It is also notable that the light "shines" (Jn 1:5) and "enlightens" (Jn 1:9), and "the life was the light of all humankind" (Jn 1:4). Light, then, is an active entity, something that brings life and knowledge.

The rest of John's Gospel continues this trajectory. Jesus claims to be the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12; cf. Jn 9:5; 12:46). Light and darkness are in conflict with one another, and the people find themselves on one side or the other (Jn 3:19-21) based on their good or evil deeds. Jesus commands his followers to "walk in the light" (Jn 12:35) rather than in darkness, which becomes something of an ethical metaphor. There is no middle ground; one is either on the side of light or on the side of darkness. It is here that the phrase "sons of light" (Jn 12:36) is reminiscent of what is found at Qumran, reflecting a cosmic battle between two very distinct sides. The phrase "sons of light" occurs only here in John, and only in Luke 16:8 among the Synoptics.

Jesus is the source of light. \*John the Baptist is merely a witness to that light (Jn 1:6-8), as are those who walk in the light (cf. Jn 12:35; see also 1 Jn 1:7), but they themselves are not the light. Jesus is also able to give light to those who have none. Consider

the man born blind in John 9. The man has no sight, and thus he lacked light also (see Blindness and Deafness). Jesus heals the man's sight while making a pronouncement about bringing light to the world (Jn 9:5). All of these examples should be contrasted with characters who appear in the darkness. Nicodemus (Jn 3:2) comes to Jesus at night, and symbolically he is in the dark; Judas (Jn 13:30) leaves at night to betray Jesus; and Jesus is arrested in the darkness of night, and the arresting mob is said to carry "torches, lanterns, and weapons" (Jn 18:3). The Fourth Gospel clearly understands the story of Christ as the playing out of a cosmic conflict between good and evil, most potently expressed as a conflict between light and darkness.

See also BLINDNESS AND DEAFNESS.

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C. Hartsock

LITERARY CRITICISM. See NARRATIVE CRITICISM.

LITURGY, LITURGICAL FEATURES. See WORSHIP.

## LOGOS

*Logos* is the Greek word for "word, saying, statement, message" and also has the meanings "reason" and "account [to be settled]." While these meanings are

found throughout all four Gospels, *logos* is well known as a designation for Jesus in the opening verses of the Gospel of John. Diverse backgrounds have been suggested for understanding this use of *logos*. Each possible background offers insight into the function of the term in John's Gospel and the way in which *logos* is employed in Johannine \*Christology.

1. *Logos* in the Synoptic Gospels
2. Literary Use of *Logos* in John
3. Background of the *Logos* in John
4. *Logos* Christology in John's Gospel

### 1. *Logos* in the Synoptic Gospels.

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) *logos* most often refers to the spoken word, either as a short saying, statement, or message, or as a longer discourse when used in the plural (Mt 7:28; 26:1). Anyone may speak *logos* or *logoi* ("words"): the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:29), Gabriel (Lk 1:20, 29), Herod (Lk 23:9), the disciples (Mt 10:14; Lk 24:17) and others (Mk 5:36). *Logos* may indicate an account to be settled (Mt 18:23; 25:19; Lk 16:2), a report about someone or something (Mt 28:15; Lk 5:15; 7:17) and a saying from the OT (e.g., "as it is written in the book of the *logoi* of Isaiah" [Lk 3:4]). Mark and Luke more often than Matthew use *logos* to refer to a word spoken by Jesus, but there are only a few instances where the Synoptic Gospels emphasize the *logos* or *logoi* as specifically those spoken by Jesus (Mk 8:38 // Lk 9:26; Mk 13:31 // Mt 24:35 // Lk 21:33; Mt 7:24 // Lk 6:47; Mt 7:26, 28) (see Gundry, 6-7). Another significant use is found in the beginning of Luke's Gospel, where *logos* refers to everything that was handed down from the eyewitnesses about Jesus—the \*gospel message (Lk 1:2; cf. Lk 1:4).

All three Synoptic Gospels portray the seed in the \*parable of the sower as *ho logos* ("the word" [Mk 4:14]). Matthew and Luke offer further description of the seed as "the *logos* of the kingdom" (Mt 13:19) and "the *logos* of God" (Lk 8:11). This seems to indicate that in this instance *logos* is used to refer to Jesus' proclamation of the \*kingdom. In addition, Luke correlates Jesus' teaching and the word of \*God in that those who listen to Jesus hear the word of God (Lk 5:1; 8:21; 11:28).

### 2. Literary Use of *Logos* in John.

In the Gospel of John *logos* can be used to refer to words or speech such as sayings, statements and discourses as in the Synoptic Gospels. Similar to the Synoptic Gospels, there are also examples of *logos* meaning "report" (Jn 21:23), a saying from the OT (Jn 12:38; 15:25) and the sum total of Jesus' teaching

(Jn 8:37; 15:20). In John, Jesus is the main speaker of *logos*, and the *logos* often is declared as Jesus' *logos* (see Gundry, 4-5). For example, Jesus says that anyone who keeps *ton emon logon* ("my word") will never see death (Jn 8:51; also Jn 4:41; 8:43). When *logos* is used of Jesus' words, there is an emphasis either on hearing his words (Jn 5:24), keeping his words (Jn 8:51; 14:23) or remaining in his words (Jn 8:31; cf. 5:38) (see Dodd). Similar to Luke's Gospel, but more evident in John, there is overlap between Jesus' *logoi* and God's *logoi* because all that Jesus speaks comes from the Father (Jn 8:28; 12:49-50; 17:14). Jesus speaks the *logos* of God (Jn 14:24).

In what is known as the "prologue" of John's Gospel (Jn 1:1-18), Jesus is called *ho logos* ("the Word") and is depicted as preexistent, with God, and as God (Jn 1:1-2). The *logos* acted in creation, has made eternal life possible in that in him was \*life (Jn 1:3), and has given those who receive him and believe in his name the right to be called "children of God" (Jn 1:12; cf. 5:24). Grace and truth came through the *logos*, in contrast to the \*law that was given through Moses (Jn 1:17). The most significant aspect of *logos* in John's Gospel is that the *logos* has been made flesh, dwelt among his people, and is equated with the human person of Jesus (Jn 1:14) (see Incarnation).

### 3. Background of the *Logos* in John.

Although Stoic views of the *logos* as the rational ordering principle of the world and gnostic understandings of the *logos* in relation to a gnostic redeemer myth have previously been suggested (see Bultmann), the more plausible backgrounds for the use of *logos* in the Gospel of John include the OT, \*wisdom traditions, Philo's writings, and the *memra* ("word") of the Lord in the Jewish Targumim.

**3.1. Old Testament.** The opening of Genesis is arguably part of the background of the first few verses of John's Gospel (see Evans). Both begin with the phrase "in the beginning," and they share similar themes of light, darkness, life, humanity and, of course, word (Gen 1:1-5, 26-27; 2:7; Jn 1:1-5, 9). Although no term for "word" is used in the Genesis account, God creates through the act of speaking (Gen 1:3). John 1:1-3 declares that all things were made through the *logos*, who was with God and was God.

However, not all of what is said of the *logos* in John 1:1-18 has its background in Genesis 1-2. The wilderness wanderings of Israel and the giving of the law to Moses at Sinai are also reflected in the Johannine account. The most obvious connection is the echo of the Lord's descent on the tabernacle in the wilderness with the tabernacling of the *logos* in John, both of

which involve \*glory (Ex 40:34; Jn 1:14). Further, there is a noticeable contrast between Jesus the *logos* and \*Moses. Jesus has glory that can be seen and beheld, while Moses requests to see the Lord's glory (LXX Ex 33:18; Jn 1:14; cf. 2:11). The law came through Moses (Ex 34–35), but grace and truth came through Jesus the *logos* (Jn 1:17) (see Evans, 79–83).

In addition, Isaiah 55:10–11 describes the way in which God's word comes from heaven like rain and snow that cause growth and produces food. This word of the Lord will accomplish what God sent it to do. In John's Gospel Jesus' descent from heaven (Jn 3:13, 31) and his doing and speaking what the Father tells him indicate similarity with Isaiah 55 (Jn 5:30, 36; 8:28; 12:49–50). These OT passages reveal the close connection between the OT and the understanding of *logos* in the opening verses of John (see Köstenberger, 25–27).

**3.2. Wisdom.** The wisdom traditions of the OT and of Second Temple Jewish writings also suggest an association between John's *logos* and *sophia* ("wisdom") (see Dodd, 274–75). Both the *logos* and wisdom are preexistent with God (Prov 8:22–31; Jn 1:1), engage in creation (Prov 8:30; Wis 7:22; 9:2; Jn 1:3) and are personified (Prov 8:22; Wis 18:15–16; Sir 24:3–22; Jn 1:1–2, 14). Like the *logos*, wisdom is said to dwell or encamp (*kataskēnoō* [Prov 8:12; Sir 24:4, 8]; *skēnoō* [Jn 1:14]) and is characterized by glory (Sir 24:16–17; Jn 1:14). In addition, there are instances where *logos* and wisdom are spoken of in parallel (Wis 9:1–2).

Although these links between *logos* and wisdom exist, there are some differences. Wisdom is created (Sir 1:4; 24:8; Prov 8:22), which is not the case with the Johannine *logos* (see Scott, 95–96). The wisdom tradition is not consistent on the acceptance of wisdom. In Sirach 24:8–12 wisdom dwells in Jerusalem and takes root among the people, whereas in 1 *Enoch* 42:1–2 wisdom cannot find a home among humanity (cf. Jn 1:10–11) (see Ashton, 366–83). Further, the *logos* is equated with \*light in John 1:3–4, but wisdom is spoken of as surpassing the light (Wis 7:29–30) (see Tobin, 254–55). Baruch 3:9–12 connects wisdom with the law, while John 1:17 contrasts the law and Jesus as *logos*. All these connections between *logos* and wisdom are noteworthy, but still they leave unanswered questions regarding the background of the *logos* in John 1:1–18.

**3.3. Philo.** T. Tobin has argued that although there are parallels between wisdom and John's *logos*, the likely place for the connection between them is found in the biblical interpretation of Philo (cf. Dodd, 276–81). As in Wisdom of Solomon 9:1–2, wis-

dom and *logos* are correlated in Philo's writings (*Somn.* 2.242–245). For Philo, the *logos* of God is the divine plan of God and is responsible for the creation of the world (*Opif.* 17–18, 24–25; *Cher.* 126–27); God's *logos* is the image of God and the model to which he shaped the world (*Fug.* 101; *Somn.* 2.45). Similar to the Johannine *logos*, the *logos* of God is referred to by Philo as God's "firstborn" (*prōtogenos* [*Conf.* 146]; cf. *monogenēs* in Jn 1:14, 18), and Philo describes the *logos* as the second God (*ho deuterōs theos* [QG 2.62]). In addition, Philo argues that the *logos* of God was intended to guide humans in the ascent of the soul (*Conf.* 40–41; 62–63; 146–47) (see Tobin, 260–61).

Philo's understanding of the *logos* shares similarities with the Johannine portrait in the role of the *logos* in creation (as with wisdom) and as being the firstborn of God. The idea of the *logos* guiding humans to God resembles the act whereby the Johannine *logos* gives authority to those who believe in him to be called "children of God" (Jn 1:12).

**3.4. Memra of the Lord in the Jewish Targumim.** *Memra* is the Aramaic term for "word" in the phrase "word of the Lord" in the Jewish Targumim, and it functions most often as a circumlocution for the divine name "YHWH." As with the Johannine *logos*, the *memra* acted in creation (*Frg. Tg. Ex* 3:14; *Tg. Neof. Gen* 1:26–27), and it is through or by the *memra* that the world was made (*Tg. Onq. Deut* 33:27; cf. Jn 1:10). The targumic *memra* was understood to be God (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 17:7–8; *Tg. Onq. Ex* 19:17). Light and life come through the *memra* (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 1:3; *Frg. Tg. Gen* 1:3), and the glory of the *memra* is seen (*Tg. Ps.-J. Deut* 5:24; cf. *Tg. Isa.* 6:1, 5, 8). Further similarities with John 1:1–18 can also be established (see Ronning, esp. 13–45; Evans, 114–24).

Some difficulties in understanding the *memra* of the Lord as the background of the Johannine *logos* include the later dating of the Targumim and the reality that the *memra* is primarily a way to refer to God without using the divine name. The *memra* of the Lord is clearly the same as God, so how can it be "with God" if it is God (Jn 1:1)? There seems to be less of a distinction between the Lord and the *memra* than we find between God and the *logos* in the Gospel of John.

**3.5. Synthesis.** Given the strong verbal and thematic connection between John 1:1–5 and Genesis 1:1–5, undoubtedly the use of *logos* in John is intended to echo the act of creation through God's spoken word. The narratives of Israel's wilderness wanderings are reflected in the tabernacling of the *logos*, and the coming of grace and truth through the

*logos* contrasts the giving of the law through Moses. Affinities also exist with the wisdom traditions found particularly in Proverbs 8; Sirach 24; Wisdom of Solomon 7–9, specifically wisdom's tabernacled, glory and role in creation.

Both Philo's interpretation of God's *logos* and the *memra* in the Targumim reveal many intriguing parallels with the Johannine *logos*. These parallels imply that some sort of relationship between them may be posited. However, it is difficult to argue for dependence either way between the Gospel of John, Philo's exegesis and the *memra* of the Lord, especially considering their most significant difference: the incarnation of the Johannine *logos*. It is plausible that their similarities indicate that the description of the *logos* in the prologue of John's Gospel coheres well with first-century A.D. Jewish interpretations of the *logos* of God (see Evans, 144–45). The possibility exists that the author of the Gospel of John was aware of some of these understandings.

#### 4. *Logos* Christology in John's Gospel.

Scholars have previously argued for the existence of a Logos hymn (Jn 1:1–18) that was joined to the beginning of the Gospel of John (see Songs and Hymns). The verses John 1:6–8, 15 are seen as insertions into the original hymn that served to relate the hymn with the rest of this Gospel. As a result of this understanding of the Logos hymn, it has been generally considered that the Logos Christology of John 1:1–18 is nonexistent in the rest of John (see Bultmann).

R. Gundry has argued that in actuality there is a strong Logos Christology, which is discernible throughout the Gospel of John (Gundry, 1–50). In other words, there remains an emphasis on Jesus as the *logos* beyond John 1:18. For instance, Jesus says that God's word is truth (Jn 17:17), and yet he himself is the truth (Jn 14:6), implying that Jesus is the *logos* (cf. Rev 19:11–13). In addition, to have God's *logos* remain in the believer is equivalent to having Jesus the *logos* remain in the believer (Jn 5:38; 8:31; cf. Jn 14:23; 1 Jn 1:10; 2:14) (Gundry, 22–23). The Logos Christology is also noticeable in the concentration on Jesus' act of speaking. Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman and the man born blind as *ho lalōn* ("the one speaking" [Jn 4:26; 9:37]). His mother tells the servants to do whatever Jesus *legē* ("tells") them to do (Jn 2:5). When challenged about his teaching, Jesus says that he has spoken openly (Jn 18:19–20). Even the double \*"Amen" sayings highlight Jesus' words (Gundry, 9–10).

Everything that Jesus speaks he has heard from the Father (Jn 8:28, 38; 12:49–50), and like the words

that he speaks, he himself has been sent from God (Jn 3:34). Jesus is both the *logos* of God and the content of his own words (Jn 14:24). He is both the revelation of God and the revealer of that revelation (see Ashton), both the proclaimer and the proclaimed (Gundry, 49). However, because of the tabernacled of God's *logos*, the *logos* of God is no longer merely spoken and heard (see Dodd, 267). The message of the incarnation is that God's audible *logos* has become visible and has been revealed (Jn 1:14; 15:22, 24; cf. 1 Jn 1:1). Jesus' opponents have neither heard God's *phonē* ("voice") nor seen his *eidōs* ("form"), nor do they have his *logos* remaining in them (Jn 5:37–38), but Jesus is the audible and visible *logos* of God, which can be heard and seen and can remain in the believer. The Logos Christology of John's Gospel emanates through the embodied *logos* of God and his words.

See also CHRISTOLOGY; GLORY; INCARNATION; WISDOM.

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#### LORD

The term *kyrios* ("Lord"), the central Christian confession regarding Jesus for the early church (cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11), had a wide variety of uses in antiquity. It is necessary to explore some of these before examining how and whether Jesus, the earli-