

## "The Word of God" in Context

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Anyone that has ever taken an Old Testament or New Testament survey class, and many people that haven't, know that Bible Study rule #1 is context is KEY. Out of context the Bible can be made to say whatever one desires but it is in context we understand and witness the infallibility and complete brilliance found in Scripture.

In a day and age where the internet provides one with more information within one Google search than what most of human history has had at their disposal combined, it is no surprise that many people can quote a verse or two from the Bible. In fact, most people that are dead set against Christianity, use the Bible to prove their "point." The problem lies of course in context.

Some time last year I was presented with the following argument, that I believe is flawed because context is not considered:

- The Bible describes what the "Word of God" is, and it is not the bible itself. Genesis says "in the beginning was the word. . . with God and was God. Revelations says in Christ's return on his forehead is written "The Word of God". Jesus is the word of God, this includes his story and the words he spoke. To say our bible in its entirety is the infallible " Word of God" is declaring it equal with Christ himself and a form of blasphemy.

As I admire the reverence, given to Jesus as He is certainly due it, I think that calling the Bible aka the "Word of God" blasphemy is going a bit far. I think to make such a claim as this we must first dive into the Scriptures a bit and look at the context, instead of just picking bits and pieces of Scripture to make a point.

First, let's take apart the statement provided and investigate the Scriptures that are quoted:

"In the beginning was the word ... with God and was God." This often quoted piece of Scripture is found in the Gospel of John not in the book of Genesis as stated by the writer. The actual passage as found in the Gospel of John says the following :

John 1:1 (ESV) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

As is the case with all Scripture, we cannot just pick pieces here and there and warp it into what we want or think it should say. Taking all of the Scripture as-is, is very important. The context tells us who is speaking, why he/she is speaking, and who the intended audience is.

As the book title indicates, the author of the Gospel of John is John, one of Jesus' disciples. This Gospel was written as a testimony about Jesus to the Jewish people.

All of this information becomes very important when we look at the actual meaning of the Scripture which will be discussed in more detail later.

The second piece of Scripture that was quoted is found in Revelation 19:11-13. It says, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns, and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD." (KJV) (italics added for emphasis)

Again, the author of the statement above has taken bits and pieces of Scripture. Not only was the actual verse morphed into something completely different, the context in which that Scripture lies was not considered. It is believed by the majority of Biblical scholars that John the Beloved (the same John that wrote the Gospel of John) wrote the Book of Revelation while exiled on the Island of Patmos near the end of his life. What John is stating in Revelation is that no one knows the Name that is written but the rider himself. This probably means the Name was in a language unrecognized by John. But what we do know is that John recognizes who the rider is. John is stating that it is Christ that is riding the horse. Just as in the beginning of his gospel, he refers to Christ as THE WORD OF GOD. The same author is assigning the same title to the same man. This symmetry that John uses in both books provides a beautiful picture of Christ coming full circle. The "Word" first shows up at the very beginning as the "book" opens and he is "closing" the second book using the same title.

This all being said, we really need to dig a little deeper into this title for Jesus. Given that the argument above is taking the translation 100% literally we really need to know what this title actually means.

The words "the Word," from both the Gospel of John and Revelation, is translated from the Greek word "logos" which means all of the following (taken from Blue Letter Bible):

- of speech
  1. a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea
  2. what someone has said
    1. a word
    2. the sayings of God
    3. decree, mandate or order
    4. of the moral precepts given by God
    5. Old Testament prophecy given by the prophets
    6. what is declared, a thought, declaration, aphorism, a weighty saying, a dictum, a maxim
  3. discourse
    1. the act of speaking, speech

2. the faculty of speech, skill and practice in speaking
  3. a kind or style of speaking
  4. a continuous speaking discourse - instruction
  4. doctrine, teaching
  5. anything reported in speech; a narration, narrative
  6. matter under discussion, thing spoken of, affair, a matter in dispute, case, suit at law
  7. the thing spoken of or talked about; event, deed
- its use as respect to the MIND alone
1. reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating
  2. account, i.e. regard, consideration
  3. account, i.e. reckoning, score
  4. account, i.e. answer or explanation in reference to judgment
  5. relation, i.e. with whom as judge we stand in relation
    1. reason would
  6. reason, cause, ground

“The Word” does not mean anything terribly special in and of itself but in context we find its importance as a title given to Jesus. The word “logos” is used 330 times total in the New Testament: 218 times as “word,” 50 times as “saying,” 8 times as “account,” 8 times as “speech,” 7 times as “Word” (meaning Christ), 5 times as “thing,” and 34 times in other miscellaneous ways. “The Word” as quoted by the author in the statement above is specifically referring to 2 of the 7 times where it is used as a title for Christ. Many of the other times “logos” is used, it is in direct reference to Scripture itself.

In the passage of John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” and Revelation 19:13 “and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD” takes the definition 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 above: a saying and a decree of God. This means that John the author is recognizing that Jesus the Christ is the decreed promise of God found in the Scriptures. Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah. By calling Jesus “THE WORD OF GOD” John is affirming Christ’s rightful title as the fulfillment of THE WORD or promise of God.

Considering that both of these books/letters are written to the Jewish people this becomes all the more significant. The Jewish people had been waiting since the time of Abraham for the fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures. The promised Messiah.

The last piece of the statement that requires some investigation is the claim that “To say our bible in its entirety is the infallible ‘Word of God’ is declaring it equal with Christ himself and a form of blasphemy.”

Let’s talk about the whole blasphemy bit. . . The Bible is very clear about what is the Word of God and what is SCRIPTURE. Jesus, yes, is the Word of God, a title given to

him because of his fulfillment of Scripture. But when the Bible talks about itself it is referred to as HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Paul the apostle, gives us a pretty clear picture of Holy Scripture in his Second letter to Timothy:

“<sup>10</sup>You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup>my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. <sup>12</sup>Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom<sup>[a]</sup> you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God<sup>[b]</sup> may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Paul states that ALL SCRIPTURE is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching. Paul never claims SCRIPTURE and Jesus are equal or even the same. In fact he even differentiates the difference in verse 15, “and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the SACRED WRITINGS, which are able to make you WISE FOR SALVATION through FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.” Scripture makes you wise for salvation through faith in Christ. Two separate entities are at work here.

In conclusion, the Bible is SCRIPTURE that is breathed out by GOD and is infallible because it comes from God. God had Scripture written perfectly for OUR benefit. In the Old Testament, God shows us our need for a Savior and that without him we have been lost since the beginning of time. God also states promises (prophecies) that He will provide us with a Savior. One who will redeem His people from the sin that we have knowingly and willingly gotten ourselves into. In the New Testament, God shows and tells us the story of His Son, the fulfillment of His promise through the Gospels, and how it should affect the way we live our lives (the rest of the NT). When John gives Jesus the title “THE WORD OF GOD” he is acknowledging the fact that Jesus is the promised fulfillment of “THE WORD OF GOD.” He is THE WORD OF GOD because all of Scripture was written about Him. A conclusion that cannot be made if verses are taken out of context.