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UNDERSTANDING JOHN 1:1

In the KJV this verse reads:

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

The Greek text for John 1:1 reads as follows:

en arche en ho logos kai ho logos en pros ton theon kai theos en ho logos (John 1:1)

Let's break it down into the three phrases and translate them literally:

- en arche en ho logos = in beginning was the Word;
- kai ho logos en pros ton theon = and the Word was WITH the God;
- kai theos en ho logos = and God was the Word.

Notice that the word "God" is used once WITH THE DEFINITE ARTICLE and the next time WITHOUT THE DEFINITE ARTICLE. Notice also that in the English translations the last phrase is usually reversed, i.e. it is rendered as "and the Word was God" instead of "and God was the Word". Since both the nouns in that phrase (i.e. theos and logos) are in the nominative case linked by the verb "to be", both could be considered the subject.

This verse was easy to understand until the Worldwide Church of God changed its teachings about the nature of God, and claimed that this verse actually doesn't really mean what it seems to say; that it really means something else. Therefore, if my discussion of this verse now seems a bit on the technical side, it is not because we need a thorough knowledge of Greek in order to grasp what God is telling us here. The meaning is plain and easy to understand; it means EXACTLY what it says! The technicalities are only needed in order to dispel the confusion that has been created about this verse.

Notice also that the Greek text clearly says in the second phrase: "and the Word was WITH THE God", rather than just "and the Word was WITH God". The Greek text here includes the definite article!

IT IS THE THEOLOGICAL BIAS OF THE TRANSLATORS that has resulted in the omission of the definite article in the English translations. Translators and experts in the Greek language will insist that in English the definite article should be omitted in this particular case (not in other situations) because it contradicts their preconceived ideas about God! We need to understand this!

John specifically included the definite article for "theos" in phrase two, but chose to omit it in phrase three.

Consider this: in the New Testament the word "theos" is used in the nominative case exactly 316 times; but in only 265 of these occurrences is it used with the definite article. In 51 places the nominative case

of "theos" is used without a definite article. So what does this show? It shows the writers of the N.T. at times deliberately used or omitted the definite article when referring to God.

Therefore when John wrote "pros ton theon" he didn't just mean "with God"; he meant "with THE God". The use of the definite article in this case has got nothing to do with "grammatical requirements". John deliberately used the definite article in this phrase, even as he deliberately left the definite article out in the next phrase.

Don't let the religious bias of translators and scholars obscure the facts. Look at what John actually wrote for yourself.

Now let's examine the preposition "pros" that is used in this second phrase.

THE MEANING OF THE PREPOSITION "PROS"

The Greek preposition "PROS" governs three cases ... the genitive, dative and accusative. It is a strengthened form of the preposition "PRO". In the N.T. "pros" is used 726 times. In the KJV it is translated as follows:

= 340 times

203 times

= 43 times

"for" = 25 times

st" = 24 times

"among" = 20 times

"at" = 11 times

words = 60 times

These different renderings into English do illustrate that the word has a broader application than any single one equivalent English word. But this does not necessarily make it a difficult word to understand.

Let's compare some of the different Greek prepositions to illustrate their meanings:

1) "PRO" (the root word of "pros") denotes the position as being in sight, or before one in: place, time or superiority.

2) "PROS" denotes to or towards, implying onward motion.

3) "PARA" means beside or alongside of.

When "pros" and "para" are compared:

-"PROS" denotes only direction and tendency.

-"PARA" denotes both motion and change of place of some object.

Next, with all three cases the general meaning of "PROS" is the motive, i.e. the stimulus to action.

1) With the GENITIVE case it means "in consideration of". It is used only one time with the genitive ... in Acts 27:34.

Wherefore I pray you to take [some] meat: for this is FOR your health (Gk. safety): for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. (Acts 27:34)

Some scholars feel that in the expression "for this is FOR your safety" (Greek "touto gar PROS tes humeteras soterias huparchei") "pros" is used with the meaning of "from the side of". Thus it either means "in consideration of your safety" or "from the side of your safety". In our discussion this is inconsequential.

2) With the DATIVE case it means "in addition to" anything, as an act. It is usually translated as "at". It is used only five times with the dative: Luke 19:37; John 18:16; John 20:12 (2x); Revelation 1:13. Here are these four verses:

And when he was come nigh, even now AT the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; (Luke 19:37)

"AT the descent" is the translation of "PROS te katabasei".

But Peter stood AT the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. (John 18:16)

And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one AT the head, and the other AT the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. (John 20:12, used twice in this verse)

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [one] like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt ABOUT the paps with a golden girdle. (Revelation 1:13)

3) The remaining 720 occurrences of "pros" are with the ACCUSATIVE case. With this case "pros" means: "with a view to anything, as an end".

It should be quite clear that in the N.T. THIS is by far the overwhelming usage of "pros". It also includes the verse we are specifically examining, John 1:1.

Let's look at a few of these 720 places where "pros" is used with the accusative case and where the meaning is very clear. In each case I have typed the phrase in which "pros" is used in capital letters for easier identification.

And now also the axe is laid UNTO THE ROOT of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matthew 3:10)

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan UNTO JOHN, to be baptized of him. (Matthew 3:13)

COME UNTO ME, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

And great multitudes were GATHERED TOGETHER UNTO HIM, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. (Matthew 13:2)

But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak FACE TO FACE. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name." (3 John 1:14 AV) [The Greek here literally reads "mouth with mouth".]

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went UNTO THEM, walking on the sea. (Matthew 14:25)

And his sisters, are they not all WITH US? Whence then hath this [man] all these things? (Matthew 13:56)

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief WITH SWORDS and staves for to take me? I sat daily WITH YOU teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. (Matthew 26:55) (used twice in this verse)

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned AMONG THEMSELVES, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine [is] this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. (Mark 1:27)

But Jesus withdrew himself WITH HIS DISCIPLES to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, (Mark 3:7)

These verses, in all of which "pros" is used with the accusative case, should make very clear that it really does mean "WITH". You know, one individual being WITH another individual. That is what "pros" means. The very use of the word "with" implies TWO DIFFERENT ENTITIES.

Next, there are very many Greek compound words which incorporate the word "PROS". Again, this illustrates that "PROS" is A COMMON WORD, which can be readily understood. Here are some Greek compound words which include the word "PROS".

"PROSOPON", which means "FACE", comes from the two words PROS (towards) + OPS (the eye). So in Greek the word "face" is "that which is towards the eyes". This word also means "PERSON".

"PROSKEPHALAION", which means "PILLOW", comes from the words PROS (to or towards) + KEPHALE (a head). So in Greek "a pillow" is "that which goes to the head".

"PROSKAIROS", which means "TEMPORAL", comes from the words PROS (to or for) + KAIROS (a season). So in Greek something that is "temporal" is "for a season".

"PROSKUNEO", which means "TO WORSHIP", comes from the words PROS (towards) + KUNEO (to kiss). So in Greek "to worship" means literally "to kiss towards (as an act of reverence and homage)".

"PROSKOPTO", which means "TO STRIKE AGAINST", comes from the words PROS (to or against) + KOPTO (to strike). In Matthew 7:27 it is used for a storm beating upon a house.

As I said, the word "pros" is very common in biblical Greek, and can be readily understood.

Now let's look at 1 John 1:1.

1 JOHN 1:1-3 EXAMINED

This verse reads:

THAT WHICH was from the beginning, WHICH WE have heard, WHICH WE have seen with our eyes, WHICH WE have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1)

Here is the next verse:

(For the life WAS MANIFESTED, and we have seen [it], and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was WITH THE FATHER, and WAS MANIFESTED unto us;) (1 John 1:2)

And here is the Greek text for this verse.

kai he zoe ephanerothe kai ehorakamen kai martouroumen kai apaggellomen humin ten zoen ten aionion hetis en PROS TON PATERA kai ephanerothe hemin (1 John 1:2, TR transliterated)

In verse 1 John employs a fourfold repetition of "that which" (Greek is "ho") to show that Jesus Christ was a physical person who could be "HEARD, SEEN and TOUCHED". This verse is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ. John refers to Christ with the words "OF LIFE" (Greek is "tes zoes"). In his gospel in John 1:4 he called Christ "THE LIFE" (Greek is "he zoe"), which is also how Jesus Christ referred to Himself in John 11:25 and in John 14:6.

Then in verse 2 John makes a parenthetical statement, just as he had also done in his gospel in John 1:14. It is to ADD REASSURANCE to his previous statement that Jesus Christ, who had lived as a mortal man, was indeed the Son of God, who has always co-existed with the Father. John opens and closes this parenthetical statement with "was manifested" (Greek is "ephanerothe") to further emphasise that the apostles had indeed seen and heard and touched Jesus.

The expression "pros ton patera" in verse 2 clearly means "WITH the Father", and this clearly implies two distinct and separate entities. Jesus Christ was one distinct entity and God the Father was another distinct entity, and they were WITH each other.

Notice the expressions John has used:

In John 1:1 it is "en pros ton theou", which means "was with the God".

In 1 John 1:2 it is "en pros ton patera", which means "was with the Father".

John is not talking about something intangible called "life", but about AN INDIVIDUAL who referred to Himself, among other things, as "THE LIFE", i.e. JESUS CHRIST!

In the next verse, 1 John 1:3, John continues to talk about "SEEING and HEARING". He then identifies the two individuals he is speaking about as THE FATHER and JESUS CHRIST. Notice:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship WITH us: and truly our fellowship [is] WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. (1 John 1:3)

In this verse the word "WITH" is not "pros". Here in all three places it is the Greek word "META", which denotes association and companionship with!

1 John 1:3 shows we can have fellowship with TWO different individuals ... with the Father and with Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as fellowship "WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT", because the Holy Spirit is not a "person".

In the same way as we in the Church, who are separate different individuals, can have fellowship with one another, in the same way we can also have fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. The word "FELLOWSHIP" implies several different individuals inter-acting in meaningful relationships.

Now the Worldwide Church of God has tried to persuade us that in John 1:1 the word "God" means something like "thinker" or "utterer", and the word "Word" means something like "thought" or "utterance". Let's see what this verse looks like if we apply that line of reasoning:

"In beginning was THE thought, and THE thought was WITH THE thinker, and thinker was THE thought." (John 1:1, one suggestion)

Or perhaps we should say:

"In beginning was THE utterance, and THE utterance was WITH THE utterer, and utterer was THE utterance." (John 1:1, another suggestion)

When such suggestions are actually spelled out like this in clear terms, it becomes clear just how foolish this new explanation really is!

God the Father and Jesus Christ are two distinct and separate individuals who have always existed together. And it is their express purpose to build a Family of Gods! Jesus Christ is now the firstborn Son of God. He is a distinct and separate person from God the Father.

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