

Defining Logos (Part One)

A Few Words About 'Word'

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We are going to begin with a little experiment. I am going to say a word and I want you to think of the definition for that word. It is an easy game and I want you to think of it in those terms and not as any kind of a test. No need to worry, you will not be quizzed on this later.

Here is the first word—think of the definition as I say the word "hat." This is simple, is it not? You probably already have a picture in your mind of a certain kind of hat. We can define hat as an article of clothing worn on the head which can be used either as protection from the elements or as an ornamentation or enhancement to one's ensemble. Okay, that went well. You did a good job! I am certain you all know what a hat is.

Here is another word, "board." This one is a bit more complex. It is a homophone of "bored." Homophone is a word that sounds like another word. We now have b-o-a-r-d and b-o-r-e-d. And to complicate matters even further we can use the word b-o-r-e-d in more than one way. It can be used as the past tense verb meaning "to bore" as in "We bored a hole straight through to China." Or it can be used as an adjective as in "Boring that hole to China made me bored."

The other word (b-o-a-r-d) can be used as a noun referring to a wooden plank as in "We nailed the board to the wall." Or it can be used as a verb meaning "to embark on a vessel; to climb onto or into something" as when one *boards* a plane or a boat. How did you do on that word? You probably thought of one of those words and one or more of their uses when I mentioned the word "board."

Now for a third word as we continue to ratchet up the complexity—foundation. Its concrete meaning (no pun intended) is "the understructure of a building usually made up of masonry, concrete, steel, or wood," depending on what the builder decides to use to make this foundation. The "concrete" meaning brings to mind a support or base; that which under-girds or under-lays something else. We could then say (and this develops into a little more abstract meaning) that a foundation is a basis upon which something stands. For example: "His ideas have their foundation in the Greek philosophers." Here, the Greek philosophers and their ideas and sayings were a foundation for someone else's thoughts.

Foundation also has another meaning. It can be an organization established by an endowment—as in the Ford Foundation or the Carnegie Foundation or any one of a number of other foundations. There is the Bill Gates Foundation and many others all over the country.

We are not yet finished. Foundation can refer to a cosmetic used as a base for other kinds of make-up. And a foundation is also a "corset." Most of you probably did not know that, but it is an undergarment which women used to wear underneath everything else.

Most of you probably understood all of those definitions, so here is a fourth word, "aufrichtig." This may elicit a few stares and the shaking of some heads, maybe a chuckle or two. But this is not a made up word; it is a real word—in German! And it has a very simple definition, it means "sincere." Most of you would have no idea what either the written word, a-u-f-r-i-c-h-t-i-g, or the sound, "aufrichtig," meant unless someone defined it for you or gave an example of its use. This gives a clue, then, that

the sound of a word or the actual order of the letters is indicative of its meaning. We must become familiar with it. You would not know that h-a-t meant "hat" unless you had experience with that growing up. Were you a German, *aufrichtig* would be part of your normal vocabulary. To a German-speaking person (as long as I pronounced this word correctly) this would have been an easy word.

We are now going to hear a fifth, sixth, and seventh word. I am going to pronounce them one after another and I want you to define them: *el*, *theos*, *god*. Perhaps these words (which are practically identical in meaning just in three different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and English) are the most complex words in all of language. They are not difficult in themselves ("*el*" has two letters, "*theos*" has five letters, and "*god*" has three letters). They are easily pronounced, but what they mean and what they encompass is complex "to the max," as we would have said in the eighties. They are deep, wide, and almost fathomless! Maybe they are fathomless words because of what they represent. They are symbols which represent a Person—the *Eternal* God with all of His characteristics and all of His history! A basic definition such as "the Supreme Being" is overly simplistic. That only scratches the surface of what God is.

In reference to Jesus Christ, the apostle John said that the whole world could not contain all the books which it would take to describe Him. And He is just one of Those who are called God!

We could say, however, that God the Father did exactly this—He tried to define Himself to us. He gave us a definition of Himself so that we could understand Him and relate to Him. In an overall sense, the entire Bible is this revelation (or definition) of Himself to man.

My subject today is much more specific than this. I would not dare attempt to define God in one sermon. It could never be done. As a matter of fact it would take the rest of my life. But I want to speak today about one word, *logos*. We will examine its meanings, its examples, and its part in defining God, Himself. What I aim to do is to "de-mystify" this term *logos*, so that it will be useful and helpful to us in our understanding of God.

This one word (l-o-g-o-s) has a mysterious air about it because it has been loaded down with a great deal of theological, philosophical, and just plain pagan baggage. If you were to look in an encyclopedia, dictionary, or commentary article about *logos*, you would find pages and pages written about this one word. Its origins and histories in Greek, Hebrew (believe it or not), Eastern and Gnostic philosophies, mystery religions, the occult (the Jewish Kabala and "Theosophy" movements) and Christianity have a lot to say about this word. The literature we find on the subject of *logos* is widespread and chaotic.

The chaos about this term is a mark of Satan's involvement in order to obscure its true meaning. He has thrown in all kinds of stuff to snatch away our attention with one thing or another, distracting us, and leading us from the path of truth. *Logos* is drowning in a sea of falsehood!

The reason this is a problem in Christianity today is that there have been a lot of Gnostic ideas that have crept in and attached themselves to our understanding of *logos*. This infiltration began right from the infancy of the New Testament Church and is evident a bit later as the apostle John was writing his gospel account. *Logos* figures prominently in John's gospel and, as a matter of fact, it appears as one of the first words in the book..."In the beginning was the [*logos*]"—he starts right out with it! Gnostic philosophy was invading the Church and the Gnostics were already beginning to use the term, even before John, to describe a *demiurge*.

Let me give you the dictionary definition of "demiurge" from **Merriam-Webster**:

An artisan, one who has special skill.

Now for the **Gnostic definition**:

A Gnostic subordinate deity who is the creator of the material world.

The Gnostics were using the word *logos* to describe this demiurge (a subordinate, supernatural deity who is the creator of the material world). You may have heard this described as an "emanation" from god. Gnostic belief, then, is in a god who created these emanations from himself. As each emanation moved further and further away from god, it became less and less spiritual and more and more material. This demiurge called the *logos* who is a created being who they said created the world.

Where did the Gnostics get this idea? They got it (believe it or not) from Plato, a Greek thinker who had philosophized about the *logos* as being a god's reason. In the intervening period between Plato and the Gnostics in the first and second centuries, this *idea* of a god's reason came to be personified.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher and contemporary of Christ, expanded upon this idea. And then, to confuse matters even further, the Gnostics took the teachings of Philo and ran with them! In one of their several philosophical schools it was taught that the *logos* was the male counterpart of the female, Sophia (the Greek word for wisdom). *Logos* (word, reason, thought) was coupled with wisdom and these, then, were the principle god/goddess—male and female.

Some even taught (and this is really weird) that the Sophia did something foolish (which is, of course, contradictory. How could wisdom do something foolish?). She attempted to make an emanation from herself like the supreme god had done. But what she ended up doing was having an aborted mass and, consequently, became distraught because she had failed to reproduce herself. So the *logos*, in this school of thought, gave life and being to this aborted mass. And guess what this aborted mass became—the material world! (I should say that it did not immediately become the material world. Initially it was a "lesser" Sophia, which they named something else and she, then, created this other being that created the world and—we can see how confused this is! You would have to be on drugs to even pretend to understand or believe this!)

These were the ideas being postulated during the apostle John's time—the time in which he wrote his gospel account. These ideas may not have been as well thought out as we have come to know them today, but they were, nonetheless, beginning to creep into the Church. John considered it his duty to set the record straight. We have his writings preserved for us today which directly counter these fantastic ideas about Jesus Christ, about God the Father, about creation and about everything. The Gnostics had it all wrong!

We can see that this idea of *logos* needs to be addressed. I want to go through this topic in a systematic way so that we can know the truth when we see it in the Bible. I want it to become a simple and familiar definition for us. I hope that by the end of this sermon it will, indeed, be simple.

First of all, I would like you to just forget all the Gnostic thought which we have just gone through because, not only is it unimportant, it is false! Those who hang on to this philosophy end up with an understanding of *logos* which is both confusing and chaotic.

I want to spend a good deal of time examining some of the New Testament occurrences of *logos* in order to see how it is used in a practical manner. By doing so we will have a good foundation (to use that word again) upon which to base our understanding of John's use of the word *logos* as a title for Christ in John 1:1. I think that if we set this foundation then John's idea and understanding will be clearly seen.

Logos (the word and its various forms) occurs 326 times in the Greek text. This makes it a rather common word. I dare say that you would be surprised at how *few* times the so-called "important" doctrinal words are used, but *logos*, on the other hand, is used many times. Each of the four gospel accounts uses it between 30 and 40 times. And Paul, in his epistles, uses it many times. The King James Version translates *logos* using 25 different words. You are likely to run across it in your Bible study and not even know it because it is not always translated as "word" (although it is so translated 218 times—or roughly two-thirds of the time). And it is translated "saying(s)" 50 times, which chops that other third, then, almost in half. So we find *logos*, then, in approximately one-sixth of its occurrences, translated using something other than "word" or "saying."

Most of you probably do think of *logos* in terms of "word" or "saying," but I do not want you to get stuck on that. Even though those are good definitions and translations of *logos*, there is a little more to it than that. This can be explained with a simple illustration. Let us say that a boss or supervisor comes out of his office and says, "Lois, may I have a word?" Think about the phrase, "May I have a word?" This does not mean that he is going to blurt out the word, "itinerary," for instance, and then turn and go back into his office. What he is actually saying is that he wants to have a conversation or say something to her that has length to it. He wants to convey a full thought to her and reason with her. He may want to give her instruction. His "word" with her might go something like this:

"Lois," he might ask, "do you have that itinerary for which I asked you?" She might then reply, "No sir, I have not quite finished it yet. There are a few things I still need to work out." Then he says to her, "I really need that on my desk this afternoon." She replies, "Well, there is that Patterson matter that I need to get fixed up." Then he might say, "No, the itinerary is much more important and that takes precedent. I am going to be going out of town sooner than that other matter needs to be completed; so get that itinerary on my desk by 3:00 p.m. this afternoon." And she says, "Okay."

The "word" that he wanted to have with her turned into a full-fledged conversation. There was something that he wanted to get across to her and, not only did he command it, he gave her reasons for it. When she came back with an argument (which she then supported by expressing that she was of the understanding that the one matter was more important than the other) a counter-reason was given which settled the matter and it was, then, business as usual.

This illustrates the meaning of the word *logos*. More than just a word, it is a full-fledged argument in many respects, although it does not have to be. It could be a reasoned discourse, instruction, or a simple saying (which could in turn be an aphorism, or some sort of proverb, or wisdom containing an entire argument). We could go to the Book of Proverbs and choose almost any one and come up with a whole teaching contained in just a few words.

Jesus did this all the time. My Bible is opened to the Sermon on the Mount and we could, for example, pull out one little phrase: "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him

take your cloak also." That is a saying. Or we could say, "Walk the second mile." It is a whole teaching wrapped up in a concise saying, but it is complete in itself. It is a logical, rational thought. It could be simple or it could be complex, but there is an idea which is put into words.

We are going to look at a number of scriptures to see how the translators decided to interpret *logos*. And we will see, too, the manner in which they used it.

The first time that *logos* appears in the New Testament is in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Do you know which word is translated from *logos*? It is the word, "reason," or in the King James Version, "cause"—for any cause. The word "word" is not even in the verse. That is why I said for you to not get stuck on the idea that *logos* means "word." It has a lot of other meanings that give it depth. It is not one single word, but a whole thought—it is a saying; it is an argument.

This idea of reason or cause is, in fact, the general Greek understanding of *logos*. If you were transported back to this time in history and you were walking along the street and were able to speak and understand Greek, this is how you would most likely use it in everyday language. It was a *reason* for something, an *argument* that you would make—it would be *why* you would do something. And you would speak something and articulate it in the form of a saying, a speech, a command, or some other form of oral or written thought. The Greek concept of *logos*, then, was reason, rationale, or thought.

We can add to this concept, too, the *expression* of a thought. It was not just the thought, itself, but it was the thought *expressed*. Thought is useless if it simply remains in your head. No one else can understand it in there. But when you speak it or when you write it down or when you present an argument, people can then say, "Oh yeah, I understand now. I get you. Now I know why you are doing this!"

So it is fine to have reason; it is fine to have rational thought, but to be of any use it has to be *communicated*. This is the idea of *logos* in a nutshell: rational thought and reason communicated.

Matthew 5:37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

In the New King James Version the word does not even appear, but in the margin it says, "Let your *word* be 'Yes,' 'yes'..." The King James Version, however, reads, "Let your *communication* be 'Yes,' 'yes'..."

"Communication" is a very good one-word definition of *logos*. Usually, when someone is communicating, they have an idea or some rational thought that they wish to be understood; they are not mumbling incoherently. Perhaps they need to go to the bathroom or ask whether something is in stock or anything else of a somewhat intelligent nature. The *truth* of a reasoned communication, however, is determined by critique and judgment. We may discover that it is not only untrue, but that it is also unreasonable, irrational, illogical, or poorly thought out.

I am going to skip the majority of verses containing *logos* and reference mainly those which use a word other than the familiar "word" or "saying." But we will begin by looking at one instance where *logos* is translated as "sayings."

Matthew 7:24, 26, 28 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock..."But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand...And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching.

In these three verses we see *logos* translated as "sayings" three times. The concept here is that the communication (or saying) is reasoned, measured, and calculated. The speech is planned, purposeful, and demanding of a certain response. If, in the story that Jesus told, there was a right response to His sayings (if they were kept) then good things happened. But if they were not kept, then bad things happened. We can see this correlation in verses 24 and 26.

Verse 28 is a summery statement of the entire Sermon on the Mount, which contains Jesus' "sayings." This verse also provides another definition of *logos* upon which Matthew is focusing—*teaching*. In this sense, *logos* can be teaching or preaching. His sayings (strung all together into a sermon) are His teaching; they are what He preached. And obviously if you are going to preach a sermon or give a discourse, you want it to be measured, reasoned, and calculated in order to produce a certain effect in the minds of the people. You want them to take it in, accept it, and do it. You do not want our *logos* to pour out of your mouths as sound and not accomplish anything. It must have an effect.

Let us examine a few more instances where we find *logos* being used. The context is not necessarily important to my purpose at this time. We are simply looking at the word itself and how it is used in a particular verse.

Luke 5:15 However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.

This, I think, is an interesting one. In the King James Version, we find *logos* translated as "fame" ("...went there a *fame* abroad of Him"). And in the New King James Version it is translated as "report." In other words people were *talking* about Him. They were relating to one another what He had said and done in their presence. And this report, then, was being passed on from one person to the next person to the next person as it began to take on a life of its own!

Jesus spoke a word and it attracted people. They heard it and they thought, "Wow." They began to think about it and talked with their neighbors saying, "Do you know what I just heard? Jesus came through here and said thus and such." And the neighbor would say, "Wow, that makes a lot of sense! I would like to go and hear Him myself."

This report, this fame (let us call it His reputation) went around from person to person throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria. It attracted other people to want to hear His sayings, too, creating a loop. Jesus spoke and His words went into the ear and a reaction occurred. His words were then repeated to another individual who said, "Wow." They then went to hear Jesus speak, heard what He is said, reacted to it, and then told someone else. That other person then went to hear Jesus speak and said, "Wow, this is really neat!" He told his neighbor and on and on it went. It was a loop and kept going from person to person to person to person.

This same process continues today. The word attracts somebody and they say, "Wow!" and start doing it. They then tell their neighbors who may also be attracted to it. The same thing happens now.

Luke 7:17 And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

This is used in a similar way. In this case the King James Version has the word "rumor" (...and this *rumor* about Him—*logos*—went throughout...). This is the same as report. It refers to people who are talking to one another. You know that they did not simply say, "Jesus!" They would say something to the effect of, "Jesus said..." and then they would repeat what He actually said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Wow, that is interesting," one might say. "Maybe I should go hear what Jesus says!" And so they would go hear Jesus' sayings or maybe a parable. They would put these teachings together and then tell their neighbor. It was, collectively, an entire body of teaching that was being passed around, little bits of it here and there: aphorisms, sayings, parables, and illustrations. They were being passed around and they were *logos*. This was not just the repeating of a word, but of concepts and ideas, rational thoughts, reasoned speech—truth!

We will now look at the beginning of the parable of the unjust steward.

Luke 16:1-2 He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. "So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

The word *logos* is here translated as "account." This rendering harkens back to the root of the word which is *lego*. (This is not the Greek word for little building blocks). *Lego* means "to lay down; to lay together." For example, if you had a pile of stones and wanted to separate all the black stones from the white stones, you would lay a black stone in one area and a white stone in another. Then you would lay another black stone here and another white stone there. You would lay all the black stones together and all the white stones together.

The word came to mean "to collect"—*lego*. The original meaning gradually morphed into "to put in order." Instead of just putting your black stones and white stones together, you would lay out your black stones in a certain organized manner and your white stones in a certain organized manner. You might have used those black stones for counting votes where you would have so many "yeas" and so many "nays." You may have pulled these black stones out of a hat or a pot into which people had placed their votes. You would have collected all of the "yes" votes and all of the "no" votes. And you would then have an account resulting in a decision. It was a *lego*—put in order to give an account.

This, then, was further modified to mean "narration." This would occur after a tally was made. You would give a narration something along the lines of "Sosthenes won the vote by a 32 to 25 margin." You would have narrated what had happened. You would have given an account of the black stones and the white stones.

The word *logos* stems from this word *lego* and so had come to mean "to give an account or narration." The meaning here in Luke 16:2 is that of "an ordered argument or discourse giving reasons to support an idea." The lord demanded of his servant an account of his stewardship. He wanted an ordered, reasoned discourse describing events leading up to this point in time—the time in which a decision had to be made whether or not to keep him in his employ. The lord of this steward

was ready to fire him and he was required to put his reasons in a logical order to support his position or his argument, which would, then, result in an outcome, a decision.

Are we beginning to get a broader idea of *logos* as meaning more than just "word?" Well, we are not finished yet. Two of Jesus' disciples are walking on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 and He comes up behind them, listening to what they are saying. Evidently, they are having an intense and exiting, perhaps even heated discussion.

Luke 24:17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

The word *logos* is here translated as "conversation." The King James Version translates it as "communication." Both are two more fine translations of this word. Oftentimes, this is exactly what *logos* ends up as being—a conversation. It is not always one-sided. In this case it was the two disciples talking with one another.

Luke 24:14-15 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. [What were they talking about? They were talking about Jesus' arrest, His trial and crucifixion, the beating He had taken, the burial, and the fact that events seemed, to them, to have just come to an end. They had followed this great Teacher, Jesus, who said that He would be raised from the dead and they were now wondering what was going to happen]. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

In this conversation (which was certainly no idle chatter or gossip) they were arguing one side or another and putting out proofs and evidence. They might have said something like, "When Jesus was with us, He said that if you destroy this temple He would raise it up in three days." The other disciple may have replied, "I do not know. I think He was referring to the Temple, itself." The other may have come back, "No, He was speaking of His body and this is now the third day! It should have happened already!" They were talking back and forth presenting arguments and evidence for one side or another. Or maybe they were both agreeing and saying that this and this and this should have happened and were perhaps wondering what they were missing.

One disciple would come up with an idea and the other would respond. It was a serious conversation and of the utmost importance to them. There was something that they should have grasped and you get the idea, from their reasoning and talking back and forth to one another (especially the details which Luke adds here), that they were missing something. They were grasping at something and they just could not put their finger on it. We see that even Jesus calls them "foolish ones and slow of heart to believe."

That is what was missing! They did not truly *believe* what Jesus had said! But the idea of a discourse, conversation, or communication comes through loud and clear in this use of *logos*. They were applying logical thought and intellect in their efforts to try and figure out the meaning of all that had happened.

Moving down through chapter 24 we find Jesus speaking to His other disciples:

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These are the words [*logos*] which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law

of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

"These are the *words* that I spoke (out of the Old Testament) concerning *Me*! And then He opened their understanding of the scriptures." This is an interesting juxtaposition of these words. Here *logos* might be better translated as "teachings" or "instructions" instead of "words." "These are the *instructions* (or *teachings*) which I spoke to you while I was still with you that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

Jesus had spent His ministry (the entire 3 ½ years) instructing them about how He had fulfilled, and was yet going to fulfill, what was written in the Old Testament. One of His aims was to draw a direct correlation between what was written in the law, the prophets, and the wisdom literature and show directly how it applied to Him. He was saying that they could not understand what was going on without an understanding of the Old Testament. The Old Testament looked forward to Him! You cannot have the one without the other!

The revelation of God in the Old Testament was an early shout about this One Person who would come and fulfill all things. If you understand what is written, then you should be able to recognize Him. How many times did He say, "These things were spoken about Me"? The sayings, the teachings, the instructions are the entire Old Testament and its relationship to Jesus Christ. But He could not merely say, "Oh, look at this in Leviticus 23:6 concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread. This is talking about Me!" No, He had to do a great deal of explaining (backed up by reason, thought, and logic) to show that "this pre-figured what I am doing."

This was just one verse in the Bible that I picked out of thin air, but just about everything in the Old Testament, in some way, reflects upon Jesus Christ. To make those connections requires a great deal of *thought*! Sometimes they are difficult to explain. And so we have the books of Paul who, Peter says, wrote things "hard to understand." He made the connection between things in the Old Testament and things in the New Testament and things in the world that needed explaining because they have to do with our salvation. This whole idea of "explanation" is wrapped up in *logos*.

We are really expanding what *logos* means. In the book of Acts, Luke picks up right where he left off in terms of *logos*:

Acts 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach...

The word is translated as "account." We look at this verse because, in the King James Version, it is translated "treatise." A treatise is one side of an argument. It is something one writes to support a thesis. Luke uses it to describe a formal narrative, or a record, of what Jesus did and taught. This is communication by words. But in this case it is not speech (as in my speaking to you) it is the written word. We see that *logos* can, just as in the Old Testament, refer to written words, oral arguments, reasoning, or sayings. It can even be thought of as providing proof because that is what a treatise does; it provides proof that supports an argument. So *logos* is not just any kind of speech or expression, but it is purposeful, thoughtful, prepared, designed, and ordered for a specific purpose. It is not babbling. It is something that is clearly, logically, and reasonably presented.

There is so much encapsulated in this word. I may be repeating myself, but I think it important to understand the vast scope of this so as not to get locked in to a one-word definition.

Acts 14:12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker [*logos*].

Herbert Armstrong's definition of *logos* was simply "spokesman." He was derided by some who said that this was not what it means. But we clearly see here that it is a correct and true definition. Not only is what is *said* supposed to be a logical thought, but the presenter is subsequently identified with the argument. The argument, or the speech, is personified in the speaker. Jesus Christ was *logos* and Paul, too, was *logos* in a lesser way. If one could see an argument in the person speaking it because of the way in which he lived, we then have a one-to-one correlation between the speaker and the speech. And this is why he could be called a *logos*. He *is* the argument. This principle is reflected in the old adage of how one would rather *see* a sermon than *hear* one. It becomes a more effective lesson.

The thinking that *logos* could be a person is not unusual. The Greek philosophers had reasoned along these lines since Plato's time. *Logos* was personified as a rational being, a rational power that speaks to men. The people from Lystra reasoned in this manner which had been developed as part of their culture throughout their generations. This is what their philosophers and priests had taught them. They subsequently concluded that Paul, who was the chief spokesman, was the personification of *logos*. This is very interesting.

We find another definition of *logos* in Acts 20:

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

Here *logos* is translated "message" in this verse. Paul was giving a sermon or a Bible study—a speech. But the translators decided to use "message" in this case. Paul was doing basically what I am doing right now—he was giving a sermon. The entire sermon could be called "a *logos*." The message itself was made up of many words and many sayings, but when they were combined in a logical, thoughtful, and directed manner, they became a *logos*. We could just as easily call it an instruction, a discourse, a teaching, or preaching. *Logos* is all of these.

I think that, from all these definitions, *logos* is really not a difficult concept to understand.

We will look at two more examples; the first of which I think is rather intriguing. I will call this Paul's interpretation of an Old Testament verse and it is very interesting how the translators decided to handle it.

Romans 9:28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth."

Where is *logos* in this verse? It is the word "work!" I consider this very interesting. This could easily be translated as *word* or *message*: "For He will finish the *message* and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short *message* (or give a short message) upon the earth."

What does the work of God deal with? The work of God is the message—the *gospel*. It is the sayings, words, and accounts, the communications and expressions, the preaching and the teaching of the Church (of Jesus Christ really, but through the Church).

What did Jesus do during His work? He preached! And, of course, He also healed and cast out demons, but His primary work was to *talk*. Not only did He speak, but He spoke in a logical, purposeful manner while *explaining* the good news of the Kingdom of God! So the translators decided to use "work" in order to point out that this entire body of teaching is God's work and, the work of the Church. This is a prophecy that He would cut it short in righteousness.

In other words, we could even say that *logos* is the gospel. What did Jesus come preaching? He came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. What was His work? His work was to proclaim the gospel. And what is *our* work? Our work is to proclaim the gospel! This is our *logos* and it is all wrapped up together!

We will turn to one more verse in our quest for a true definition of *logos*. I chose this one because it is so simply and obviously stated.

James 1:21-23 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word [*logos*, teaching], which is able to save your souls [This is specific; it is the message of salvation and it is called "the implanted word."]. But be doers of the [*logos*], and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the [*logos*] and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror...

I thought that this was so simply stated. Here *logos* is identified as the message of salvation—the teaching we need in order to be saved. In addition to simply receiving the word, we are instructed to also *live* the word, *do* the word. If we do not do this word then we are just like a "natural man" and we will fail to produce the true and intended effect of the teaching. *Logos* is a systematic, purposeful communication designed to bring about a certain result. I feel that James clearly brings this out. Speech, or the written word, or any other form of expression that instructs and guides to cause a specific outcome, is *logos*. That outcome may be to cause one to believe, change a specific behavior, or any one of a number of other desired results.

God's *logos* (the end result He desires and for which He is working) is to reproduce Himself. We can see this purpose in the verses we have just studied for the general use of the word. He uses the *logos* to call and convert human beings as His children in preparation for eventual resurrection into His Kingdom. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the message of salvation. This is the teaching of God's Word—the *logos*, the sayings.

What about *logos* in the Old Testament? "*Logos* in the Old Testament," you ask? "Was the Old Testament not written in Hebrew? How can *logos* appear in the Hebrew Old Testament?" Well, it cannot! It must be a different word.

There is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, in which *logos* does appear many times. It is not my intention to go through them all, for there are too many. But I do want to show that the Jews (and especially the apostles and John in particular) were not unacquainted with the concept of *logos*—*logos* in the Old Testament and *logos* divinely personified. Let me repeat that: the Jews (the ones to whom John was writing as well as members of the Church) were not unacquainted with the concept of *logos* and even *logos* divinely personified as John used it in John 1: 1! He was not writing something new! He was writing something about which the people for whom the book was written would say, "Exactly!" It would not have been a surprise; it would have simply appeared in a different language!

John begins his gospel account with the dogmatic statement, "In the beginning was the Word..." He purposefully intended to bring to mind Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." His intent was for people to immediately recall the beginning of the Old Testament. The first three verses of the gospel according to John and the first three verses of the book of Genesis have wonderful parallels! If one knew what Genesis 1:1, 2, and 3 said, they would immediately understand what John was getting at in John 1:1, 2, and 3.

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light.

What does this book aim to do—both the Old Testament and the New? What is its major goal? The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God! Its purpose is to show how God works and to show God's mind. The purpose of the Bible is to let men in on the secret that is God to the end that they may have a relationship with God and come under God's government. That is exactly what God starts out to do and He does it with a *bang*! It is not explicitly stated, but it is the idea of God—the revelation of God—that comes out in these three opening verses!

The initial verse holds two revelations of God. The first is..."in the *beginning* God." What does this say? It says that God was in the beginning, and He must have existed *before* the beginning because there was nothing else EXCEPT God at the beginning. And so God was pre-existent! This is the first revelation: God was pre-existent.

The second revelation found in Genesis 1:1 is that "God *created* the heavens and the earth." This One who pre-existed is also Creator, the One who created all things, the God who created the entire universe and everything in it—including humanity.

Here in the first verse—the first ten words—we already know two things about God! And they are stupendous and almost more than we can possibly understand! God has always lived and that He is the Creator of everything. This is a very important Being about which we are speaking!

The second verse also adds two revelations about God. The third revelation is..."the *Spirit* of God." We are told that God is a spirit, an invisible and immaterial, but powerful Being. God is not material like a man. We cannot see God. He is not weak with the flesh. This is a Being we cannot see or touch, but there is immense power! God was and always has been—and He created everything!

The fourth revelation tells us that this Spirit of God "*hovered* over the face of the waters." I have mentioned this word before in terms of fluttering like a bird. This idea of hovering has an idea behind it, in the Hebrew. This Spirit is not just there, suspended, but hovering is surveying (looking out over), planning (figuring out what God was going to do with all this), preparing (gathering what was needed to accomplish what needed to be done), calculating (figuring out exact proportions), and organizing (figuring out how to most efficiently do what needed to be done). This tells us that God is a Being of *reason*. God is a Being of intellect, purpose, design, and logic.

So in these first two verses of the Bible we already have four HUGE ideas of God!

And then in verse three we have a fifth revelation which is found in the word, "said." "And God *said*, 'Let there be light.'" And what happened? There was light! What this reveals about God is that, when

He communicates, THINGS HAPPEN! When He speaks, reality takes place. His word becomes real. When He said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," it happened! When He said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one place," it happened! When He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass," it happened! He speaks and things happen! They become real; they become *true*!

The idea that the Hebrews took from this was that God's Word made, shaped, and fashioned reality. "Word," to them, was not just something that was said and then disappeared into the ether. The Hebrews thought of words as real things. This is similar to the principle by which we used to live in this country—that a man's word is his bond! If a man said something you could take it to the bank; it was going to happen. If a man shook your hand and said, "I will give you a thousand dollars for this job," and you did it, he would come through and pay you the thousand dollars. It was a real thing.

How much more so with God? If God said something, it was a sure bet it was going to come to pass because God's Word was reality and He had all the power of His being to back it up!

And so here, in the first three verses of the book of Genesis, we have five immediate revelations of God. Hold on to these: He was pre-existent; He created all things; He is a Spirit; He is a Being of reason; and when He spoke, reality was the outcome—it was truth. Reality and truth are pretty much the same thing. Is that not amazing? There was so much truth and revelation there. And John, being a Hebrew, understood it and put it into Greek.

There is one more thing that I want to touch on before we close and this will take just a moment. I want you to see that the "father of the faithful" understood this, too. This is the beginning of God's covenant with Abraham—the original covenant with His people. The specific wording occurs at a significant time. Notice how it begins:

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

This is the first occurrence in the Bible of "the word of the Lord." Did you notice that God said, "I?" He wanted Abraham to put these two things together—the Word of the Lord and Himself.

Do you know what Abraham says in verse two? Abraham said, "Lord God, what will you give me?" This was not just some saying. This was not just some word. It was not just some thought. He thought of the Word of the Lord as a Person. He called Him "Lord God." When this Word of the Lord came to him in a vision he saw a Person. It was not some ethereal, philosophical understanding. He saw a Person whom he called, "Lord God." And this all has to do with the covenant!

The One with whom *we* make a covenant is a Person, a Being of great power! And, as we saw in Genesis 1, this God is a pre-existent, creating Spirit and a Being of reason, intellect, and purpose; this is a God who speaks and things happen!