

THE MEANING OF JOHN 1:01

Verse: John 1:01 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (King James Version)

Premise: Because of the rules of Greek grammar, the word “God” has a qualitative relation to “Word” and not an interchangeable relation as is common in English when linking two nouns with the verb “to be.”

The New English Bible accurately translates this verse using these rules of Greek grammar. This version translates John 1:01 as “When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was.”

Conclusion: Using the rules of Greek grammar and the identities of the Word and God, John 1:01 could be translated – “In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God the Father, and Jesus Christ was just like God the Father.”

Explanation: Greek is a very different and more complex language grammatically than English. Greek has a grammatical system of declensions which dictate that the spelling of the noun, its definitive article (e.g., “the”), and its adjectives all change with the use of the noun in the sentence.

Greek has four main declensions or cases:

- (1) Nominative – subject (doing action)
- (2) Accusative – direct object (receiving action)
- (3) Genitive – possessor (showing possession)
- (4) Dative – indirect object

Greek also has three genders: Masculine, feminine and neuter.

For masculine nouns like ο θεος (the God) and ο λογος (the Word), the declensions are as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------|----------|-----------|
| (1) Nominative – | ο θεος | ο λογος |
| (2) Accusative – | τον θεον | τον λογον |
| (3) Genitive – | του θεου | του λογου |
| (4) Dative – | τω θεω | το λογο |

Since Greek uses declensions to denote the use of the nouns in the sentence, word order is much more fluid and less strict in Greek than it is in English. In Greek, the

subject of the sentence can come later in the sentence or even at the end of the sentence, depending on what is being emphasized in the sentence.

In most languages, including English and Greek, when a sentence has two nouns that are linked by the verb “to be”, then one of the nouns is the subject of the sentence and the other noun is the predicate nominative. The term “predicate” means the part of a sentence containing a verb and stating something about the subject. The term “nominative” means relating to or denoting a case of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives used for the subject of a verb. Therefore, a predicate nominative is a noun which is linked directly to the subject by the verb “to be”

In English, the word order of the sentence dictates which noun is the subject and which noun is the predicate nominative. In English, the first noun of the sentence, which lies in front of the verb, is the subject. The second noun, which comes after the verb “to be”, is the predicate nominative.

An example is the sentence “The man is the pastor.” In this sentence, “man” is the subject and “pastor” is the predicate nominative. In English, this grammatical construction gives the meaning that the man and the pastor are one in the same and are interchangeable, which is what is implied and which is what is understood.

An example of this grammatical construct in Greek is given in John 8:12, which states:

John 8:12 – “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

◀ **John 8:12** ▶

John 8 - Click for Chapter

3825 [e]	3767 [e]	846 [e]	2980 [e]	3588 [e]	2424 [e]	3004 [e]	1473 [e]	1510 [e]
Palin	oun	autois	elalēsen	ho	lēsous	legōn	Egō	eimi
12 Πάλιν	οὖν	αὐτοῖς	ἐλάλησεν	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	, λέγων	, Ἐγώ	εἰμι
Again	therefore	to them	spoke	-	Jesus	saying	I	am
Adv	Conj	PPro-DM3P	V-AIA-3S	Art-NMS	N-NMS	V-PPA-NMS	PPro-N1S	V-PIA-1S

3588 [e]	5457 [e]	3588 [e]	2889 [e]	3588 [e]	190 [e]	1473 [e]	3756 [e]	3361 [e]
to	phōs	tou	kosmou	ho	akolouthōn	emoi	ou	mē
τὸ	φῶς	τοῦ	κόσμου	;	ὁ	ἀκολουθῶν	ἐμοὶ*	οὐ
the	light	of the	world	;	the [one]	following	Me	no
Art-NNS	N-NNS	Art-GMS	N-GMS	Art-NMS	V-PPA-NMS	PPro-D1S	Adv	Adv

4043 [e]	1722 [e]	3588 [e]	4653 [e]	235 [e]	2192 [e]	3588 [e]	5457 [e]	3588 [e]	2222 [e]
peripatēsē	en	tē	skotia	all'	hexei	to	phōs	tēs	zōēs
περιπατήσῃ	ἐν	τῇ	σκοτία	,	ἀλλ'	ἔξει	τὸ	φῶς	τῆς
shall walk	in	the	darkness	,	but	will have	the	light	-
V-ASA-3S	Prep	Art-DFS	N-DFS	Conj	V-FIA-3S	Art-ANS	N-ANS	Art-GFS	N-GFS

In John 8:12, Christ states “I am the light of the world.” In this sentence, the word “I” is the subject and the word “light” is the predicate nominative. The subject precedes the verb “to be” and the predicate nominative follows the verb and has the article “the”.

In this sentence structure in Greek, as in English, the subject and the predicate nominative are both in the nominative case and are equal and interchangeable. Christ stating “I am the light of the world” means that the term “the light of the world” was interchangeable with Him. He and the light of the world were one in the same.

However, in Greek, John 1:01 was written with an entirely different grammatical construct:

◀ John 1:1 ▶

John 1 - Click for Chapter											
1722 [e]	746 [e]	1510 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]	2532 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]	1510 [e]	4314 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]
En	archē	ēn	ho	Logos	kai	ho	Logos	ēn	pros	ton	Theon
1 Ἐν	ἀρχῇ	ἦν	ὁ	Λόγος	, καὶ	ὁ	Λόγος	ἦν	πρὸς	τὸν	Θεόν
In [the]	beginning	was	the	Word	and	the	Word	was	with	-	God
Prep	N-DFS	V-IIA-3S	Art-NMS	N-NMS	Conj	Art-NMS	N-NMS	V-IIA-3S	Prep	Art-AMS	N-AMS
2532 [e]	2316 [e]	1510 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]							
kai	Theos	ēn	ho	Logos							
καὶ	Θεὸς	ἦν	ὁ	Λόγος							
and	God	was	the	Word							
Conj	N-NMS	V-IIA-3S	Art-NMS	N-NMS							

This verse in Greek is:

“Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.”

The direct word-for-word translation of this verse is:

En archē ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
In a beginning was the Word and the Word was with the God and God was the Word.

In English, there are two ways to refer to nouns depending on whether they are definite or indefinite. If a noun is definite, we use the article “the” to denote a specific definite noun, such as “the book” which is a definite book, not just any book or a book in general. If a noun is indefinite, we use the article “a” to denote a general nature of the noun, such as “a book” which means an unspecified book. Again, “I read the book” (definite) has a different meaning than “I read a book” (indefinite).

The Greek language is different than English in that Greek has definite articles for the English word “the” which differ in spelling by case, number, and gender, but Greek has no word for the English indefinite article “a.” In Greek, the indefinite nature of a noun is shown by simply not including the definite article with the noun.

For example, “ο λογος” means “the word” whereas “λογος” means “a word”. The grammatical term for using the definite article in Greek is “arthrous” which means “an article is used”, and the grammatical term for not using an article in Greek is “anarthrous” which means “no article is used”. Therefore, “ο λογος” is arthrous, and “λογος” is anarthrous.

In Greek, a special meaning is given to the predicate nominative when it precedes the verb. When a predicate nominative precedes the verb in the sentence, then the predicate nominative becomes “anarthrous”. These anarthrous nouns are predicate nominatives without definite articles which precede the verb and are considered to be qualitative, which places the stress on the quality, nature or essence of the subject of the sentence, and not an equalization with the subject.

For example, 1 John 1:05 states: “ο θεος φως εστιν.” which is translated “God is light.”
the God light is

◀ 1 John 1:5 ▶

1 John 1 - Click for Chapter

2532 [e]	1510 [e]	3778 [e]	3588 [e]	31 [e]	3739 [e]	191 [e]	575 [e]	846 [e]	2532 [e]
Kai	estin	hautē	hē	angelia	hēn	akēkoamen	ap'	autou	kai
5 Καὶ	ἔστιν	αὕτη	ἡ	ἀγγελία	ἣν	ἀκηκόαμεν	ἀπ'	αὐτοῦ	, καὶ
And	is	this	the	message	that	we have heard	from	Him	and
Conj	V-PIA-3S	DPro-NFS	Art-NFS	N-NFS	RelPro-AFS	V-RIA-1P	Prep	PPro-GM3S	Conj

312 [e]	4771 [e]	3754 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	5457 [e]	1510 [e]	2532 [e]	4653 [e]	1722 [e]	846 [e]	3756 [e]
anangellomen	hymīn	hoti	ho	Theos	phōs	estin	kai	skotia	en	autō	ouk
ἀναγγέλλομεν	ὑμῖν	, ὅτι	ὁ	Θεὸς	φῶς	ἔστιν	, καὶ	σκοτία	ἐν	αὐτῷ	, οὐκ
we preach	to you	that	-	God	light	is	and	darkness	in	Him	not
V-PIA-1P	PPro-D2P	Conj	Art-NMS	N-NMS	N-NNS	V-PIA-3S	Conj	N-NFS	Prep	PPro-DM3S	Adv

1510 [e]	3762 [e]
estin	oudemia
ἔστιν	οὐδεμία .
is	none
V-PIA-3S	Adj-NFS

In this sentence, “God” (ο θεος) is in the nominative case and hence is the subject of the sentence. However, the noun “light” (φως) is a predicate nominative and is anarthrous (without definite article “the”) preceding the verb. The arthrous version of “light” in Greek is “το φως”. This anarthrous noun in the preverbal position dictates that the noun “light” is a quality or nature or essence of the subject of the sentence “God”. God and light are not interchangeable.

For another example, 1 John 4:08 states: “ο θεος αγαπη εστιν.” which is translated “God is love.”

the God love is

In this sentence, “God” (ο θεος) is in the nominative case and hence is the subject of the sentence. However, the noun “love” (αγαπη) is a predicate nominative and is

anarthrous (without definite article “the”) preceding the verb. The arthrous version of “love” in Greek is “ἡ ἀγάπη”. This anarthrous noun in the preverbal position dictates that the noun “love” is a quality or nature or essence of the subject of the sentence “God”. God and love are not interchangeable.

◀ 1 John 4:8 ▶

1 John 4 - Click for Chapter

3588 [e]	3361 [e]	25 [e]	3756 [e]	1097 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	3754 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	26 [e]
ho	mē	agapōn	ouk	egnō	ton	Theon	hoti	ho	Theos	agapē
8 ὁ	μὴ	ἀγαπῶν	, οὐκ	ἔγνω	τὸν	Θεόν	, ὅτι	ὁ	Θεὸς	ἀγάπη
The [one]	not	loving	not	has known	-	God	because	-	God	love
Art-NMS	Adv	V-PPA-NMS	Adv	V-AIA-3S	Art-AMS	N-AMS	Conj	Art-NMS	N-NMS	N-NFS

1510 [e]
estin
ἔστιν .
is
V-PIA-3S

In 85% of the instances of anarthrous preverbal predicate nominatives in Greek, the sentence is read as if the predicate nominative is indeed arthrous, unless by context, the non-specific general nature of the predicate nominative is understood. The two previous examples in 1 John 1:05 and 1 John 4:08 are examples of that non-specific general nature of the predicated nominative.

The same grammatical construct of an anarthrous preverbal predicate nominative occurs in the last portion of John 1:01, which is:

θεος ην ο λογος.
God was the Word

In this sentence, the subject is “the Word” (ο λογος). The verb is “was” (ην). The noun “God” (θεος) is the predicate nominative which is in the anarthrous position without the definite article preceding the verb.

Whereas 1 John 1:05 and 1 John 4:08 dealt with non-specific general nouns such as “light” or “love”, John 1:01 deals with a predicate nominative being a noun of specific nature, “God”. Therefore, the sentence would be read with the understanding that the definite article “the” is associated with the predicate nominative “God” even though the word “the” does not appear in the sentence.

Therefore, this Greek grammatical construct dictates that “the Word” is not interchangeable with “the God”. Instead, “God” in the anarthrous preverbal position means that the Word is qualitatively like “the God”, that the nature of the Word is the nature of the God, and that the essence of the Word is the essence of the God.

From other research, in all but two instances in the New Testament, “ο θεος” and its declensions in the New Testament were all found to be references to God the Father.

Therefore, what the last portion of John 1:01 is stating is:

“The Word was qualitatively like God the Father.” or

“The Word has the same essence and nature as God the Father.”

The New English Bible translates this passage as:

“What God was, the Word was.”

Taking this passage in the New English Bible one step further, the passage would read:

“What God the Father was, the Word (Jesus) was.”

Substituting the New Testament names in the verse, John 1:01 could be written as the following:

“In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God the Father, and Jesus Christ was just like God the Father in quality, in essence, and in nature.”

Therefore, the Greek grammatical construct in John 1:01 shows us the following:

- Jesus Christ is pre-existent and is eternal.
- Jesus Christ was not created.
- Jesus Christ has been with God the Father for all eternity.
- Jesus Christ is divine and is just like God the Father in quality, essence, and nature.
- Jesus Christ is not God the Father.