



QUEST 52

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Logos – A Progressive Understanding

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1. **Originally** “word” meant “to collect” with particular reference to a collection of words such as a dialogue, explanation, or defense.
2. **Plato** added to it the idea of the “immortal.” Before anything substantive takes shape, it must be preceded by an idea which gives it “flesh.” This is not merely cognitive but in the ethereal or heavenly realm there is a reality of things that take shape on earth. This is *logos*.
3. The **Stoics** added a “generative principle” (*logos spermatikos*). That is, all things emanate from God. The creative power to make them concrete is the *logos*.
4. The **New-Platonists** extended the Stoic’s definition to incarnation. In other words, the *logos* wasn’t just the idea in the spiritual realm, nor merely the power to create, but the very incarnation of that idea.
5. The **Mystery Cults** added the idea that prayer was a reciprocal action of *logos*. Thus *logos* didn’t just come to us from God, but we could “answer back” in prayer and petition.
6. **Philo** took a short step from there and suggested that *logos* was a mediating “demigod” between the transcendent God and the material world. (He used *logos* 1,300 times).
7. **The Old Testament** used *dabar* to represent *divine fiat*. When God says it, it takes shape (Isa 6:9-10; 24:1-3; 40:8; 45:23; 55:11). Sometimes this *dabar* looks somewhat incarnational (Isa 9:8; Psa 107:20; 147:15, 18; cf. *Wisdom* 18:15-17). It also represented the O.T. Law. John 1 picks up on this theme, of course.
8. **John’s** use differs from others in that (a) *logos* is uncontrollable by man, (b) it is incarnational, (c) it is individual rather than pantheistic, and (d) it is historical.