Subject and Predicate Nouns
Semantic Relation of Subject and Predicate Nominatives

Word order does not determine Subject or Predicate in Greek. In Greek, if a sentence says, "a clown a man is," both clown and man are nouns, that is, they occur in the nominative case. So, which noun is the subject, and which is the predicate? Is the man a clown? Or is the clown a man?

Greek grammarians say, "Predicate nouns as a rule are anarthrous [and] definite predicate nouns preceding the verb are anarthrous" (Blass, Debrunner and Funk, *Greek Grammar,* Univ. of Chicago, 1961, #273). Anarthrous means having no definite article ("the").

Daniel Wallace explains how to distinguish subject from predicate nominatives: (a) if one nominative is a pronoun, then it is the subject; (b) if one nominative is a proper noun (name), then it is the subject; and (c) if one of the nominatives [following the verb] has a definite article, then it is the subject. (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Zondervan, 1996, 80ff). For example:

Mark 2:28   κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου (Lord is the Son of Man even of the Sabbath): "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

John 1:1   θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (God was the Word): "The Word was God."

John 4:24   πνεῦμα ὁ θεός (Spirit the God [is]): "God is Spirit."

Hebrews 1:10 ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σού εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί (works of hands thy are the heavens): "the heavens are the work of your hands."

The following five verses in 1 John employ predicate nouns to teach theological truth.

2:22   Ἰησοῦς … ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός (Jesus … is the Christ): "Jesus … is the Christ."

4:8   ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν (the God love is): "God is love,"

4:15 5:5   Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (Jesus is the Son of the God): "Jesus is the Son of God."

5:1   Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς (Jesus is the Christ): "Jesus is the Christ."