

# It's all about Jesus

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Date: 06 January 2019

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] on chapter 1 on the pew bibles this is page 1063 and my good friend owen dudley edwards my supervisor from my studies he's going to read to us the opening first 18 verses of john chapter 1 people visited the louvre museum in paris not only is that the most who visited any museum in 2018 that's the most people who have visited any museum in any year in any place and i would suggest that each of those 10.2 million people would have made sure that part of their visit to that museum they would have seen the masterpiece the mona lisa now if you've been to the louvre if you've seen the mona lisa you might share with me the impression i thought it would be bigger it seems to be quite small and the dimensions of mona lisa are roughly 21 inches by 30 inches not a big portrait so if you want to get a good glimpse of it if you can make your way through the crowd of 10.2 million people you want to move closer to that canvas to see the detail the smile etc by contrast a couple years ago there was a display of another piece of artwork this was a a sketch or what was called a cart and the subject was waterloo now this particular sketch was of a different magnitude instead of being 30 inches by 21 inches this cartoon was 13 meters by 3 meters so that when you saw wellington in the middle of the sketch he was life-size and the horses were life-size now with a big canvas instead of moving closer a big canvas requires you to take a step back because unless you if you don't take a step back you're not going to appreciate this huge 13 meter canvas that's in front of you now the apostle john is giving us the biggest possible canvas he's painting us the largest possible portrait and he's asking us to take a step back so that we can grasp what he's trying to teach us because he's trying to teach us something about life he's trying to teach us something about eternal life he's trying to teach us something about the meaning of life but in so doing he says the center of his portrait and the subject of his masterpiece is none other than jesus christ and he says this subject has no beginning and this subject has no ending this subject is there throughout all time in all places so as we read in this prologue john who was a fisherman in the first century in the middle east he had a life-changing encounter with the subject of his book you see he's not just telling us something about god he's not just telling us something about jesus he's telling us that which he's seen with his own eyes and that which he's heard with his own ears so the miracles that he relates to us and john gives us seven miraculous signs he was there he was there in cana when the water was turned to wine he was there he could see jesus walk on water and feed the five thousand and he was the one who heard he was the one who heard those seven i am sayings i am the light of the world john heard it i am the way the truth in the life he heard those words i am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep jesus is the center of this masterpiece not surprisingly that big canvas of waterloo right in the center was the duke of wellington why because he won the battle he was the hero he was the subject of that particular canvas and you want all eyes to go right to the center of the portrait

and jesus is the center of this portrait and jesus is the center of this church it's why we're here and he needs to be the center of our lives now take it from me this is not how we are naturally wired because in one way or another and i'll just speak from experience here we like to be the center of the story now for one day out of the year if it's october the 13th you can forgive me for being the center of the part if there's a party and it's my birthday then i can be the center of the party at least for one day but we like to be the center of the party each day every occasion what does this say to me what does this have to and now that's an important question what does this say to me where can i find myself in this story that's a very important question to ask when you're reading the bible but it's not the most important question to ask because the most important question to ask as you're reading a part of the bible or considering life you ask the question where's jesus in the story and how do i relate to the jesus that i find in this story he's the center you and i are part of the story but we're not the center of the story he is the center of the story and he wants to be the center of your

life he wants to be the focus of your prayer he wants to be the object he wants to be the object of your praise and the foundation of your life and with this big canvas as we start the year 2019 i'd like us to consider what john wants us to know about this jesus because he's giving us this introduction again you can ask yourself what is it that prompts a fisherman to write such a book what is it that prompts a former businessman who was concerned with the buying and selling of fish what is it that would prompt such a man to write such a book what kind of encounter what kind of person is jesus that prompts this and the other three accounts of his life what is it about jesus what is it about what he said what is it about what he did what is it about how he lived what is it about jesus that makes someone want to write a story want to give a biography wants to give an account such as this well with you i'd like to notice just a few things because we've got a lot in these short 18 verses first of all john wants to tell us this that jesus had no beginning and yet he became you may think those two things are hard hard to understand maybe philosophically hard to understand if he has no beginning how can he become if he has no start how can he become something because isn't he always something well the answer is yes he always is god he always was god he always will be god so in that sense he has no starting point i mentioned october 13th october 13th the year was 1966 that's my starting point and each one of us has a starting point the day we were born now we celebrated a few weeks ago christmas we celebrated the birth of jesus we don't believe that he was born on the 25th of december that's a side issue but we believe that jesus became a human being that he was born into this world and yet we believe that he had no beginning in the beginning john says was the word and the word was with god and the word was god so there we have the beginning the start and there was jesus he precedes the beginning the beginning of time the beginning of history the beginning of the human experience he was there for far beyond far before that and yet we're told in verse 14 the word became flesh one of the early leaders of the church one of the early writers of the church put it this way remaining what he was he became what he was not now this is a profound mystery how is it that god how is it that one person can be fully god and fully human that's a mystery i cannot explain to you but it's a mystery that the bible presents to us profoundly clearly and powerfully that jesus christ is fully god no beginning no end and jesus christ became a human being he was born he lived he died he rose again he ascended into heaven so for a 33 year period he dwelled on earth and yet he has no beginning he has no end he always is he was the source of all that we have he's the creator we're part of the creation he created all things were told through him all things were made without him nothing was made that has been made in him was life and that life was the light of men so he's the creator and he's the source of life and he's the source of light now in the bible we have darkness portrayed and darkness is symbolic darkness symbolizes ignorance we don't get it darkness symbolizes sin we do what we're not meant to do we don't do what we're meant to do and darkness also symbolizes despair and jesus shines the light he shines the light of knowledge he shines the light of purity he shines the light of hope into the dark world so he's the there in the beginning he's god he's the creator of all things he's the light of this dark world he's the source of life in all of its fullness and john gives us this testimony this powerful testimony in verse 14 he says the word became flesh made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory john saw the glory of god in jesus christ the glory of the only god from all eternity he saw god in the flesh he said i've seen it we've seen it we've seen god we've seen the glory of god in jesus and in verse 18 he says there's something else he says no one has ever seen god but god the one and only who is at the father's side has made him known so when we see jesus john says we see god the invisible god is now visible the glory of god which was previously confined and previously secluded is now on full display in jesus christ so john is not seeking to explain that which is inexplicable that jesus has no beginning and yet he became a human being but he wants you and i to know this is a fact that jesus christ is a fully formed human being just like us and jesus christ is god in all of his fullness so we have a powerful a personal a compassionate a knowing savior who understands us and who understands god because he's one of us and he's god that's a profound mystery but that's the profound testimony that john gives to us john wants to share what he has seen john wants to tell what he has experienced and this brings us to our second point that there is no comparison to jesus no one compares to jesus and yet we have the ability to speak of him and to point to him so the incomparable jesus is testified by ordinary people the incomparable jesus there's a message about him that's delivered we see this delivered by a man called john in verse 6 this is john the baptist there came a man who was sent from god his name was john he came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all men might believe so that jesus is the center of the canvas jesus is the center of the

story and yet these other characters are there and they have a significant and an important role to play but theirs is not a primary role they have a supporting role so john the baptist came to testify he came as a witness he came as a signpost in verse 15 he says john testifies concerning him he cries out saying this was he of whom i said he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me john must decrease jesus must increase john the signpost you don't dwell on the signpost you follow where the signpost is leading you and john would later say in john one behold the lamb of god who takes away the sin of the world so jesus is incomparable and yet john the baptist testifies to this incomparable jesus the second testimony here is from moses so we have the great figure of the old testament remember moses who was called by god to lead the people of god from slavery to freedom it's quite a vivid picture of the gospel isn't it in the old testament captivity slavery bondage freedom and moses was called by god to lead the people of god and not only did moses lead the people of god from egypt to well the wilderness towards the promised land but moses was the instrument through whom god delivered the law so if there's one character in the old testament of primary importance it would be moses and we're told that for the law was given through moses so moses like john the baptist was also a witness also had a testimony because the law testifies or should testify you see the law can't save us meaning that you and i can't do all that the law requires we can't fulfill all that god demands rightly demands but rightly understood the law testifies first of all the law shows us the the problem my problem the law says you shall not covet and we recognize that we do covet we want what belongs to other people we're not content what we have with what we have so the law shows us the problem shows us that we're not right but the law also rightly understood leads us to the one who can make us right it's like a described as a school teacher or as one who brings someone to school now jesus is the one who makes us right but rightly understood the law should bring us to jesus because he and only he is the one who kept the law and he and only he is the one who can take those who have broken the law and to forgive us and to restore us and to renew us so in this brief section we have two clear testimonies john the baptist testifies concerning jesus he says that here's the one who is far greater than me moses testifies concerning jesus the law is good the law is intended for our blessing the law is intended to help us but the law cannot save us the law came was given but through moses grace and truth came through jesus christ so there's no comparison between john the baptist and there's no comparison between the law given by through moses and grace and truth which came through jesus christ and the third test of testimony of course is the book itself the author john not john the baptist but john the apostle john the disciple john the brother of james the son of zebedee eyewitness eyewitness earwitness spent three years with jesus and he testifies that what he has seen is true and you see you might say well does that mean he's unbiased absolutely he's completely unbiased because he says this he says jesus did and this is at the end of the gospel jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book but these are written that you may believe that jesus is the christ the son of god and that by believing you may have life in his name we all are biased we all have certain predispositions we all have certain prejudices we all have certain experiences that give us a certain bias now the bible tells us that apart from god and apart from jesus we have a bias against god and a bias against jesus why because we don't see as we should see we don't feel as we should feel we don't think as we should think sin in this world has created a disconnection or a corruption and what we need is to be realigned reconnected that our eyes could be open that our ears could be open that our minds could be renewed that our hearts could be transformed so the apostle john is a biased witness because he says this is what i've seen and this is what i've heard and the conclusions to which i have come there is no other conclusion to come to so not only am i telling you what i saw but i want you to see it too i'm not going to tell you what i believe but i want you to believe it too so in that regard i too am unbiased i have a bias towards jesus i have a bias towards the gospel i have a bias towards towards the the bible because i've seen i've come to know i've come to understand i've come to believe that this is true true for me true for you true for them true for everyone so no one can compare with jesus and yet jesus uses ordinary people to testify concerning him he doesn't need us but he uses us doesn't need the law given by moses but he uses the law and he uses moses doesn't need john the baptist but he uses john the baptist doesn't need john the apostle but he uses john the apostle he doesn't need you or me but he uses ordinary people to achieve his extraordinary purposes third point i just want to mention is that jesus with all of this god becoming a human being the source of light the source of life the creator of all things the one who sustains all things the one through his death and resurrection redeems for himself a people jesus was rejected

by the very people who should have welcomed him and yet he invites anyone and everyone to become part of his family he was the light but the bible tells us that men love darkness instead of light why their deeds were evil he was a source of life and his life was rejected in fact his life was taken away from him he was the one who shined light into dark places and one of two things happened either those who wanted that light and wanted that life were attracted to him but those who preferred darkness and who preferred doing things their own way they were repelled by him it's like a magnet magnet is one of two things a magnet attracts or a magnet repels depending on the very the charge or

[ 20 : 14 ] which side of the magnet it is and jesus does two things he attracts people to him and he also repels people from him some will see in him the source of life and the source of eternal life and will find themselves trusting in him for life and for its eternal life others will hear what he has to say and will say i do i do not want what he has to offer i do not like what he has to say i do not need what he all what he is providing and we're told in verse nine that the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world and like a great author you're thinking here's the here's uh raising our expectations that when this arrival comes that the welcome will be universal why he's created everything he's the source of light he's coming into a place of darkness he's the source of hope he's coming into a place of despair he's the author of life and he's come to give life he was in the world verse 10 and though the world was made through him the world did not recognize him didn't get it didn't see didn't understand back in 1955 disneyland opened its doors in california there's now other branches in different parts of the world but the first disney was in disneyland in anaheim california and it was the dream of walt disney it was his design it was his plan he oversaw its production its construction and ultimately it was his he owned it and the story goes and when and when disneyland opened its doors it was flocked with people let me just imagine one disney and people wanted to go there to see see the rides see the characters to be part of that experience and huge queues for all the rides and one day this older gentleman was walking around with a group of people and they just went right to the front of the line they weren't waiting in the queues so he brought his guests to the front of the line they went on the rides they went through the amusements and at one point one of the exasperated uh guests who had been waiting a long time to go on the rides whether it's small it's a small world or whatever pirates of the caribbean if it was there then cried out and said look who do you think you are do you think you're walt disney uh to which the elderly gentleman replied well yes i am walt disney and the reason why he was treating disneyland as if it was his own because it was his own you know he didn't need to wait in the line it was his place he could go to the front of the line if he wanted to but people didn't recognize him they knew the name but they didn't know what he looked like jesus came into the world and he wasn't recognized people didn't know who he was people didn't figure out what he was about and because they didn't recognize him they didn't receive him they didn't welcome him and not only that that's more a general response but the more specific response was this that he came to the people that had the knowledge of him his own people the jewish people were told that he came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him they had the bible they had the old testament they had the psalms they had the prophets they had the the books of moses they had the predictions they had the prophecies they had the expectation they knew that someone was coming and that someone came they had been praying they had been longing for that day there's a long period of silence when it seemed as if god wasn't doing anything or if god wasn't saying anything then all of a sudden he did and all of a sudden he came but these were the people who by and large said no we do not want this jesus we do not want his life we do not want his death we do not want his resurrection but or and yet in verse 12 yet to all

to all who received him and to those who believed in his name so the world that was made through him didn't recognize him his own people who should have anticipated his coming by and large they didn't welcome him but to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become i was reminded now about 18 years ago a young man from high school in fife came to edinburgh university 17 years old almost 18 and he came to edinburgh with a decided position that he had grown up in a christian home he had grown up in church and he came to university and he wanted nothing to do with church he wanted nothing to do with christianity he had 17 years of that and now he was in edinburgh then lo and behold one sunday morning it's 11 o'clock he's walking past the clue he had been told that there was a church in this locality he was up early went along to see it found himself here in the church church and three or four months later came to faith now he

showed me a book that i gave him that december before he had become a christian and in that book i wrote the verse john 1 12 yet to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of god it was the lee strobel book the case for christ because in the introduction to that book lee strobel says it's basically like an equation if you like maths he says if you receive and if you believe then you become think of it receive plus believe equals become and i i like that book and i like that verse so i wrote to my friend alistair dear alistair best wishes for a happy new year it would have been 2001 uh and wish you every blessing well over that christmas break he came to believe himself in this same jesus his desire was to have nothing to do with the gospel his desire was to have nothing to do with jesus but jesus had a different desire and jesus had a different goal but notice these words to all who received him not to some or to most or to a few but to all all different kinds of people and all different kinds of backgrounds receiving jesus welcoming jesus think of the welcome mat in front of a door imagine the negative imagine you go to your family home and for some reason the door is locked for some reason it's bolted you can't even you open it with your key but you knock on the door you know somebody's in and and a member of your family opens a door and the next thing you see the door slam and in your face you think this isn't right this is my family home this is my family this is where i belong that was the experience of jesus but you turn the tables and you say well but for us instead of rejection we were received instead of having a door slammed in our face we're welcomed by jesus into his family to all who received him and to those who believed in his name you see it's not about doing it's not about what you do it's not about what you've done it's not even about what you are convinced you will one day do but it's about trusting in him what he has done what he has provided and what he and who he is because the name and this word believed in his name it really means everything everything about jesus his character his life his identity his work when we believe in his name we we we take him for who he is we take him for what he has done and we basically say jesus i'm going to trust you on this one i'm going to trust you that you've done

what is required and i'm going to trust you that you can do what you promise and i'm going to trust you that you can bring to completion all that you have promised to complete and to conclude i mentioned in the children's address that i've got two passports maybe some of you have two passports if you've got two nationalities it's interesting a couple years ago i found out that i have two birth certificates not everybody has two birth certificates the first birth certificate says my name is robert john accurate i was born on the 13th of october 1966 the second birth certificate says i was also born on the 13th of october 1966 but that my name is thomas gilroy that was my original birth certificate the second birth certificate is my legal birth certificate because i was adopted i was brought into a new home a new family my legal status changed my name changed my relationship changed my family changed and if you want proof i've got proof i've got the document it's stamped by the state new jersey that says i am legally part of this new family yes the original birth certificates told a different story but my legal birth certificate tells a new story and that's exactly what john is saying here he says all of us have a story we have a past but the question is what about the future what about now are you willing to let god write a new story for your life are you willing to let god change the direction of your life are you willing to become part of his family because the final portion of that verse is this to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of god when i got this second birth certificate through the mail i was told that this is not a legal document that i cannot use this as a form of identity that i cannot you know get a passport based on that name because it's not my name anymore the document is no longer legal anymore it's a it's a piece of history that's what happens when you become a christian whatever's in the past becomes a piece of history it's no longer relevant it's no longer valid why because you have a new status and a new standing and a new relationship you become a member of his family you become a child of god so think of the big canvas canvas that john is painting at the beginning of that canvas is jesus the middle of the canvas is jesus the end of the canvas is jesus but you and i can be part of that magnificent canvas not only not not just as a bystander we're not just looking in at the at the events we become part of the events we're not looking in at like a big family reunion we're part of the family reunion we're not looking through the window and seeing a beautiful table set with a wonderful meal with lots of seats and lots of people seated we're at the table we're seated at the meal and we're enjoying the food to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of god if i had a title for today's message i would say the title is simply this is all about jesus it's all about who he is it's all about what he's done it's all about what he is doing it's all about what he is will achieve but i'm asking you are you part of

his story is he part not just part of your life is he the center of your life is he the focus of your mind is he the the the the basis or the foundation of who you are and what you do because this equation is still true that friend of mine 18 years ago who received jesus and who believed in his name he became a member of the family of god he became a child of god he's still following trusting in jesus and the guarantee is for you as well when you receive jesus on his terms not yours when you believe in his name meaning you're going to trust him for who he is and what he has done then the reality is that you as i you will become a member of his family you will become one of his children and you will be part of his story forever and ever so as i wish you a happy new year i pray that you and i would find ourselves in this big canvas that john is painting for us that we might find ourselves in the story but with jesus firmly at the center of that canvas and firmly at the center of our lives you you you you you