

John Ch1v1-18 - Introducing Jesus

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[0 : 00] In our Bibles, please, to Genesis chapter 1. We have two readings today, and the first one is in Genesis.

Genesis. Genesis chapter 1.

Genesis chapter 1.

We are starting a new series, The Gospel of John. You may be wondering why we're starting in Genesis. Well, you'll see in just a minute, so be patient. But there's a little booklet here which will give you a summary of the whole gospel.

So you don't have to read it all at once, but you can take your copy on your way out, read a section at a time, and dip into it at any time through our series just to remind ourselves of what the big picture is, what it's all about.

[1 : 30] So that's John's Gospel. It'll be sitting on the table as you leave this morning. So Genesis 1, you'll see the connection in just a minute.

We're going to read the first few verses. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, let there be light. And there was light. Now let's turn to John's Gospel, Chapter 1.

John's Gospel, Chapter 1, starting at verse 1 through to 18.

[2 : 44] And see if you can make the connection. In the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. 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 all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

Now this John is not to be confused with the writer of John's Gospel. John's Gospel, the writer, was a disciple of Jesus. This John here in verse 6 is John the Baptist.

[3 : 48] The last prophet who came speaking about Jesus. Verse 7. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

He himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

He was in the world. And though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

[5 : 09] John, that's John the Baptist, testified concerning him. He cried out saying, This is the one I spoke about when I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

Out of his fullness, we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father has made him known.

Well, let's pray. Our Father God, we ask for one simple thing, that through your Word now and by your Spirit, you would reveal afresh to us who you are, how we can know you and what you have done for us.

Be our teacher and help us, we pray. Amen. I want you to think and imagine with me.

[6 : 42] Suppose for a moment you don't know me. You don't know there is a Johnny Grant. Think about it.

You could spend your whole life oblivious of my existence. Now, some of you might be thinking that's a wonderful thing. I would disagree.

As far as you are concerned, I'm just not here. You see, the only way for you to know me is if I am to introduce myself to you, to tell you something about myself.

I reveal myself to you by my word, by what I say. Now, think about this.

Is there a God? If there is a God, how do you know? Is it possible to even know this God?

[7 : 49] And is there any way at all of finding out anything about God? Well, John helps us because he begins his gospel by introducing God to us.

Look at verse 1. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. Now, it seems a little complex.

Why does he keep saying word? Why couldn't John just simply say in the beginning was God? Well, the word is God's self-revelation of himself.

God makes himself known to us through his word. word. And that word, the word that he speaks, is not just spoken word or speech or language.

That very word is a person. Verse 14. The word became flesh, became a human being and made his dwelling among us.

[9 : 11] Who is that word? Well, look at verse 18. No one has ever seen God but the one and only Son, that's Jesus Christ, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made God known.

You see, God introduces himself to us by introducing himself to us through Jesus, who is the word.

So three things we're going to look at through this introduction. Jesus is our God, Jesus reveals God to us, and Jesus makes us children of God.

God. So first, Jesus is our God. John gives us four stunning truths about Jesus for us to reflect on together.

First, Jesus is our eternal God. John begins this gospel, doesn't he, with the familiar phrase, in the beginning.

[10 : 23] He's taking us right back, all the way back, to the very first words of the Bible, which we read just a moment ago, Genesis 1, verse 1, in the beginning, God.

Now as mind-boggling as that is, the Bible is telling us straight out that before anything existed, there was God. God simply exists.

There was never a time, no matter how far you could travel back, that God was not there, that God did not exist. He has always been.

Now John wants us to know that that's exactly the same with Jesus. Look at verse 1, in the beginning was the word.

Jesus isn't created, he exists, he has no beginning and no end, he is our eternal God. God. But he's not just our eternal God, he's also our creator God.

[11 : 33] Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He brought things into existence by speaking his word. Remember what we read, God said, let there be light.

And there was light. light. Now John makes it clear that the word that God spoke at the very beginning of creation is not just language, but is also a person.

Verse 3, through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made.

Now it's a bit mind bending, isn't it, all of this thought? Jesus designed and shaped and formed all things. Jesus created the vastness of the universe.

The sun that we feel, that object, burning object behind the clouds that we get to experience once a month, is only one of a hundred thousand million star-like suns in our galaxy.

[12 : 52] Wow! In fact, our galaxy is only one of a hundred thousand million galaxies. Now I know that's blowing your mind.

We can't comprehend the vastness, but God, Jesus, spoke it, brought it all into existence. humans. But he also created the invisible to the naked eye, tiny algae-like creatures.

If you were to take a teaspoon from a lake of water, you would count one million algae in that little teaspoon.

And yet, gather them all together around the world. they produced 35% of the world's oxygen. Jesus made the planets, and he made the unseen algae.

He's our creator God. And he's our life-giving God. Verse 4, in him was life, and that life was the light of mankind.

[14 : 06] Light is needed for life. Without light, everything falls apart. So, when Jesus is described in verse 4 as life and light, it's telling us that he is the source of all life, that in him is life, and that he sustains all of life.

Jesus doesn't just create everything, he also keeps everything going. He is the one who created the sun, that great ball of fire way out there that provides just the right amount of light to keep the algae producing the oxygen that you and I are breathing right now to live.

if Jesus stopped, the universe would collapse into nothingness. You and I would cease to exist.

But more than this, and perhaps more amazingly, Jesus is our relational God. Look at verse 1 with me again.

in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. It's telling us Jesus is God, and yet he is also distinct from God.

[15 : 39] But yet at the same time, he is with God, verse 2, he was with God in the beginning. There is only one God.

But here we're told that Jesus, who is God, enjoys a relationship with God the Father. We see that explicitly in verse 18.

Read with me verse 18. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God, and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

So, from before time began, before there was anything, God the Father, was in enjoying a relationship with God the Son.

They lived in communion with each other, relating to one another. Jesus is our relational God.

[16 : 47] You see, the word is the eternal, creating, life-giving God. He's not just a thought or an idea or the result of our imaginations. He is God who has always existed and the God who made you and I.

But more wonderful than all of these big ideas is that God is both personal and relational. He's not some distant way out there force.

He exists in community with himself and amazingly invites you and I to say, come and be part of that relationship with the Father and with the Son and as we will see in time, by the Spirit.

So first, big idea that John wants to get across to us is Jesus is our God. And related to that, second, is Jesus reveals God to us.

You see, the wonderful truth is God doesn't wait for us scurrying around here on planet earth to come up and find God. No, he's the God who made us and takes the initiative to come to us so that we can be in relationship with him.

[18 : 08] three things show this. First, light for the world. Verse 9, the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

A couple of years ago, I had the great experience of going caving in the Burren, led by an experienced guide. as we descended down into that cave, the light became less and the darkness became more.

And once we were in the belly of the cave, what we had to do was turn off our torches and it became pitch black. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

You couldn't guess who anyone was. We would bump into each other and touch and feel. Who is this? We didn't know. We became disorientated walking into the sides of the cave and into each other.

But then turning on the torch, ha, I can see. Now we're all in the dark about God.

[19 : 27] None of us can know him unless he gives us light. without the light coming, we just stumble about in the darkness, trying to figure things out.

We become disorientated. Well, God provides the light that we need so we can know him. And what is that light?

Well, it becomes clear in verse 14, doesn't it? Second, God becomes man. Verse 14, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

The word that spoke the light into existence is the light that now comes into the world. Jesus is the light.

He reveals God to us. He is God in human form. God One writer put it like this, the word became flesh, a real human baby.

[20 : 44] He had not ceased to be God. He was no less God than before, but he had begun to be a man. He was not God minus some elements of his deity or his godness, but God plus all that is humanity.

It's extraordinary, isn't it? The eternal God enters into the history and time. The creator God becomes a baby in the womb of his mother Mary.

The life-giving God cries out for food and water. The relational God becomes one of us. He moves into our neighbourhoods.

And as the word became flesh, so God was on display in human form. Verse 14, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We, says John, have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. God became one of us.

[22 : 06] Flesh that you could poke and feel in the person of Jesus so that we could see God and know him.

God and God and God was alive when Jesus walked the earth. He could sit down and have a meal with him.

He could go swimming with him. He could have food with him. But I mean, what about us today? How do we get to see God? How can we know God?

Well, I've jumped ahead. You can see it there on the screen. We see Jesus in the scriptures. We can't see God in the flesh.

We're not going to meet Jesus if we went down to Barry Collins for our shopping. But we can and we do meet him in the Bible. Jump with me please to chapter 20.

[23 : 07] Towards the end. here Thomas who was to become one of Jesus' disciples has known and heard that Jesus has died and some have come to tell Thomas that Jesus has risen and here Thomas has an encounter with the risen Jesus.

chapter 20 verse 28 and upon seeing Jesus verse 28 Thomas said to him my Lord and my God then Jesus told him because you have seen me you have believed blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed so there were some who saw and believed and now he's saying Jesus saying well look there are those who won't see me but they also will believe how's that possible well read on verse 30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book but these are written and have been recorded that you may believe that Jesus is the

Messiah the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name John was one of the first eyewitnesses of Jesus who wrote down what he saw and what he heard so that you and I here today could know God you see everything that God has to say about himself is revealed in the person of Jesus and everything that we need to know about Jesus has been recorded in scripture in other words there's nothing more we need to know about God than what we see in the person of Jesus and there's nothing more to know about Jesus than what we read in the Bible so Jesus reveals God to us he comes in the flesh and his account his story who he is is written down so that you and I today can personally and relationally know

God well how does all that happen how can I know God in a personal and intimate way well imagine imagine if Jesus did turn up in Carragaline this afternoon imagine that Jesus moved into number 12 to drive water park imagine if Jesus was your next door neighbour that he lived next door to you imagine he was one of your work colleagues that you took the bus with every day imagine that he was your football coach every time you saw him you would be looking at

God every time you talked with him you would be hearing God would you would you welcome him would you believe in him would you treat him as God of your life well as we know from John's gospel Jesus did once 2000 years ago come into this world he was somebody's neighbor he did sit and talk and chat and eat with people and yet shockingly and surprisingly people refused Jesus look at verse 9 again the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world but surely if God came to the world everybody would want to follow verse 10 he was in the world and though the world was made through him the world didn't recognize him they didn't want him he came verse 11 to that which was his own that is to his own race to his own people but even his own people didn't receive him how could that be possible as Jesus walked the streets of

[28 : 13] Nazareth as he performed his miracles as he healed the sick and raised the dead as Jesus called people and said believe in me and you will have life in all its fullness they didn't recognize Jesus they didn't receive him as God well it's still the same today people are not bothered with the person of Jesus even when they're confronted with his claims they do not want Jesus to be God of their life and I'm no different and you are no different look at chapter 3 verse 19 we'll get to this later in our studies but just very quickly chapter 3 verse 19 this is what he says about us this is the verdict light has come into the world but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil it's a damning verdict isn't it we actually prefer to live in our own darkness wandering around as it were in the belly of a cave bumping into things trying to figure life out disorientated living life as if I am God back to chapter 1 but not everyone rejected him verse 12 yet to all who did receive him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God many of you here today have believed and trusted and you have come to experience life with Jesus a life that is satisfying and fulfilling that you are his child and you have that relationship with the father but how did it happen well let's be clear it's not something that we just decided for ourselves I didn't wake up one day and decide you know what I think today I'm going to become

God's child or I'm going to become part of God's family no becoming a child of God is something God does for us look at verse 13 pick it up rather at the end of verse 12 he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent so not of our own well being or our own ancestry or anything else nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God just as I had no say in my parents decision to have a child so I had no influence in becoming God's child child we must be end of verse 13 be born of God God must give us a new spiritual life

I cannot just make it happen on the 14th of December 1971 a most marvelous thing happened I was born long before I had a conscious thought or made an audible sound my parents had decided to have a child from that very first moment I was loved and cared for they provided for me they made decisions for my best they sacrificed and served they gave me a name Jonathan and they delighted over me I was treasured and nurtured and blessed I experienced their warmth embrace I was their child and I received the rights and privileges of the family

I belonged never to be disowned I was safe and secure now tell me what part did I play in making any of that happen what did I bring to exchange for such love well it was all freely given and all freely received it was a gift of grace grace and that is just a tiny glimpse of what God does for us so if it is God's work that I become a child of God well then how do I how do we become children well it's simply admitting that I cannot become God's child by my own effort and desire I must come in humble dependence on

God and trust that he alone makes me his own there's no pride no arrogance no superiority you see left to ourselves we would never know God we would be stumbling about in the darkness but in love God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ the lights shone so that we could see and believe and have the joy of being called children of God children who are loved by an eternal God children who are treasured by a creating God children who are blessed by a life-giving God and children who are secure and full and complete forever by our relational God do you know him

[34 : 49] I hope you do and if you don't ask him ask him to show you so that you too can become his child let's pray father your good word has taken our minds to mind blowing places of vast expanses of space and time and yet it all boils down to a personal God who has come to us that I that we could become your children a relationship with our eternal God life with him forever and ever thank you God for coming to us for making yourself known to us so that we can be in your family thank you thank you amen amen we're going to sing what is it we're going to sing there we are here's a great song to bring our minds to the great creator God but the creator God who came to die for us to give his life for us so that we could have life for him if you know him you'll want to sing this out in praise and celebration I invite you to stand if you can sit and be live