

Introduction to John's Gospel - Part 2 (John 1:1-18)

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[0 : 0 0] Now, as I said, I want to return to John chapter 1 this evening, this afternoon. This morning we looked at it, and we met John, John the Apostle.

We saw his purpose for the book, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing we would have life in his name. And we met Jesus just a little bit.

We saw that he is the eternal word, the creator of everything, one with the Father since before all worlds. We saw that he became flesh and lived among us.

The creator became a creature. This afternoon we're going to look at why Jesus came. You're going to see that he came to bring light into darkness.

He came to bring us into the family of God. He came to bring grace and truth. He came. But how was he received? How was he received? And we're going to follow those points this afternoon.

[1 : 1 4] Light is a wonderful thing. Jesus came as light and light of the world. And he came to give light to everyone.

In the passage that we read together in verse 4, in him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and darkness has not overcome it.

Going down to verse 9, the true light that gives light to everyone who's coming into the world. And then Jesus is that light, that light.

Now if you ever find yourself in absolute blackness, absolute darkness without a torch, you know just how wonderful it is to see the light.

We don't often find ourselves in that position nowadays. But once I knew what that was like, there's a railway tunnel just outside Peebles.

[2 : 1 8] I don't know whether any of you have met it. It's just upriver a little bit on the upriver side of Peebles. If you walk on the walk that's on the far side of the river and keep going, you come to it.

You come to the entrance to it. And if you enter it from the end away from Peebles, and walk into it, it's got a bend in it.

So you can't see the far end. And you get to a section when the darkness appears absolutely total.

You can't see anything ahead of you, black. You can't see where you're putting your feet. And you're walking along and you think, there could be a big hole in front of me. I'm about to step into it.

You can't see it. Or there could be something lying there, a branch, or an old railway sleeper, and you'll trip over it. So you walk along carefully. You're frightened of tripping or something.

[3 : 2 1] And you get to that point when it turns, and the far end of the tunnel appears, just faint and far away. But it's great to see it.

First time we went through it, I think we didn't have a torch. After that, we've been through it since, and we always took a torch from then on, because it is a little bit black in the middle.

It's great to be back in the light. You can see where you're going. See, darkness isn't the opposite of light. Darkness is the absence of light, really.

Darkness is the absence of light. And men and women without God are in the darkness. Are in darkness. Because God is light, as Jesus is light.

The Word is light. And everyone who has not God is in darkness. And as we go through John's Gospel, we will see that darkness is often used as a symbol of evil and ignorance.

[4 : 26] Chapter 3, verse 19, we read that evil men love darkness rather than light. Chapter 12, verse 35, we read, the man who walks in the dark does not know where he's going.

But, chapter 12, verse 45, no one who believes in Jesus should stay in the dark, because he is light. He is the light of men.

God is light. 1 John 1, verse 5. God is light. If we claim to know him, but walk in the darkness, we lie. Jesus, who spoke light into the darkness at creation in Genesis 1, verse 3, when God said, let there be light, and there was light, Jesus came as the light of the world.

And he would say of himself, I am the light of the world. So, he came to bring light into our darkness. And it is through Jesus that we make sense of everything.

I think it was C.S. Lewis who said he believed in the sun, not only because he can see it, but because he can see everything else with the light of the sun.

[5 : 49] He sees the sun, yes, the sun's up there, but also everything else he sees by the light of the sun. And Psalm 36, verse 9 says, With you is the fountain of life in your light.

We see light. He gives us light. But then you say, well, why does everyone not come to Jesus? Why, when he is the fountain of life and light, do folk not come to him?

Well, we've got an enemy, haven't we? 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, tells us that God of this world has blinded the eyes, the minds rather, of those who don't believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, whose image of God, should shine into them.

The devil has blinded men's eyes. Word of Christ, we are blinded, so we do not see.

It's when we come to Christ that he cures the blindness, he lifts the veil, and we start to see. So, anyone listening tonight or online, if you haven't come to Jesus, the Bible says that you're blind, spiritually blind, and you need to be cured of that blindness.

[7 : 17] But Jesus opens the eyes of the blind. That's what he did when he was here, and that's what he does still. He opens the eyes of the blind.

We need to seek him. We need to ask him to open your eyes. That's why he came. He said, Lord, open my eyes. Help me to see.

So, Jesus came to bring light. Secondly, he came to bring us into the family of God. verse 12 there.

Verse 12. To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

What a wonderful verse this is. What a promise it is. To all who receive him, Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

[8 : 25] How can I become a child of God? Verse 12 tells us, I must receive him. I must believe in him. I must have faith in him, have confidence in him, for he is the savior.

And faith that saves is faith that receives. The two go together. To believe in Jesus' name is to believe in him as our savior, the one who carried our sins on the cross.

To believe he is wounded for my transgressions, for our transgressions. He is bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brings us peace was upon him. And with his wounds I am healed.

We are healed. To those who receive him, in faith, that is what we believe. But to those who receive him, Jesus comes as savior and as Lord.

He comes as savior and as Lord. In Matthew 11, 28 to 30, Jesus invites us to him with these well-known words. He says, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden.

[9 : 32] Excuse me. I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

See, when Jesus calls us to him, he says, Take my yoke upon you. In other words, accept my lordship. The cow that has a yoke on its neck, it has to do what its master is making it do.

It has to put it. But Jesus said, Jesus says, Take my yoke. Accept my lordship over your life. And then he says this wonderful thing.

You will find my yoke is easy and my burden is light. My yoke is easy and my burden is light. You see, saving faith yields allegiance to Jesus and trusts him completely.

Acknowledges his claims on my life and confesses him as my saviour but also my lord. My lord. For that is why he came to make rebels and sinners children of God.

[10 : 49] The hymn writer wrote, Behold the amazing gift of God the Father has bestowed on us the sinful sons of men to call us sons of God.

Now, this salvation is a gift. Verse 12, he believed in his name, he gave the right to become sons of God.

It's a gift. It's freely given. It's freely given to those who come and receive it in the hand of faith. Notice that Jesus didn't say to those who manage to live good enough lives, he gives the right to become children of God.

No, no, he didn't say that. He doesn't say to all who are good citizens and help old ladies across the road, he gives the right to become children of God. No. He doesn't say to those who have their own faith, he gives the right to have children children of God.

It is to those who receive Jesus and who believe in him that he gives the right to become children of God. We have to come as sinners to Jesus.

[12 : 06] And notice too that membership of God's family doesn't depend on our human family. The sons and daughters of God were born not of the blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.

This does not come from our human family. It doesn't depend on our mom and dad. We don't become children of God because our mom and dad were children of God or are children of God.

We don't become children of God because there are preachers in the family. It's a wonderful privilege to grow up in a Christian home but each of us must come to Jesus personally by faith.

Neither are we born from God's family if our parents are pagan or Buddhist or Muslim because we all become children of God through faith in Jesus.

That's the only way. That is the door by which we must enter and that is why he came to bring us to make all who believe children of God.

[13 : 21] And he came to bring grace and truth. Grace and truth. no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the Father's side.

He has made him known. Sorry the verse before that. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Back in verse 14 the world became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the Father full of grace and truth.

Grace and truth. See the law says obey the rules and you'll live. If you go to Deuteronomy and read the blessings and the cursings and you'll see that it was cursed if you don't do this cursed if you don't do that the law was severe against those who disobeyed it.

So if you want to be saved by your own efforts the way is clear obey the commandments right? Always and perfectly if you really try you'll find that you cannot keep them perfectly and the harder you try the more you realize that you're incapable of keeping the commandments.

The fact is no one is ever saved by keeping the commandments. Martin Luther tried to earn salvation by keeping the rules.

[15 : 08] He became a monk to help him keep the rules and he tried very hard to do everything that a monk was supposed to do but he couldn't keep the rules.

As part of the daily routine in a monastery a monk has a senior monk to whom he confesses his sins and he's known as his confessor and Luther was so conscious of his sins that he was always confessing them.

It took hours for Luther to confess his sins every day. Now you might ask what can a monk living in a monastery have to confess?

But Luther found lots of things in his heart. He knew that by keeping external rules he didn't change his heart. His heart was not changed.

So trying to find forgiveness he was continually confessing. He said that if ever a monk could be saved by his monkery it was me.

[16 : 17] Because he'd done everything that he could. But he never found peace in that monastery trying to keep the rules. He only found peace when he realized that it is by grace that you're saved.

That salvation is by faith apart from law. And he found that the righteousness of God by faith is what he needed and what he found in Jesus Christ.

You see God provided a way of forgiveness. We can't keep the rules. We can't. The rules show us our sin. Before Jesus came a substitute would take the place of the sinner.

A lamb or a bull or a goat substitute. And the substitute would die in the place of the sinner because God had said the soul that sins shall die. The wages of sin is death.

But the substitute in the Old Testament took the place of the sinners. But all these sacrifices you see they were models of what Jesus would do in reality. Moses gave us the law.

[17 : 27] Moses shows us our sin and the law shows us our need of a substitute. but in his grace God provides a way of salvation that is apart from law.

Grace. Grace is a special gospel word. No man made religion ever thought of grace. All man made religions teach that you get what you deserve.

Hinduism says well if you live a bad life this time you'll come back as a rat or a snake next time or if you live a good life you'll maybe come back as a better person or eventually you won't come back at all.

You'll escape this world. False Christianity says do the best you can and you'll be alright. You can't do better than that. Do the best you can. But the best you can you see isn't good enough.

How often I visited old people and when I asked them were they ready to die? They would say well I've done the best I can. I've done the best I can. But it's not good enough.

[18 : 37] It's not good enough. All our righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight. Isaiah 64 verse 6.

If you're trusting in your own efforts you will never please God because God has provided a substitute Jesus.

Jesus. And grace teaches us that salvation is a gift. Grace is the undeserved kindness of God. Undeserved.

Can't earn it in any way. Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Grace is loving God loving us when we're still as enemies and sinners. Grace is God taking that man that woman who is his enemy forgiving him changing him adopting him into his family giving him a new heart.

Grace is being given a new life in Christ when we deserve condemnation. Grace is the father of the prodigal son running down the road to welcome him home.

[19 : 48] The son who's wasted the family money in a far country but he welcomes him home. He says this son of mine was dead and is alive again was lost and is found.

Grace is rebels and sinners like you and me being born into the family of God because Jesus has died. And grace and truth came through Jesus.

Jesus could stand up and say I am the way the truth and the life. no man comes to the father except through me. You see Jesus reveals to us God clearly perfectly and without any lies.

You look for truth you find it in Jesus you find it in Jesus. You don't find it anywhere else in today's world of fake news where you're never quite sure whether it's right or wrong Jesus is the truth.

You need God's grace Jesus shows us that grace. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And four and finally how was he received?

[21 : 10] How is he received today? How have we received him? In verse 10 we read that the creator of our world came into the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own, his own people and his own people did not receive him. For centuries God had been preparing a people, the Jews, the Hebrews, teaching them so that when the Messiah came they would recognise him.

The prophecies that told them what he would do. And devout Jews were waiting for him. They thought they were waiting for him anyway.

They claimed to have been waiting for him for hundreds of years. But they didn't recognise him when he came. They didn't recognise him because they had their own ideas of what the Messiah would do and be.

And Jesus didn't fit their picture. They didn't recognise him because their hearts were hard because of sin and their eyes were spiritually blind because the God of this world had blinded their eyes.

[22 : 26] They didn't want him because he made them feel their sinfulness and they didn't want anyone to tell them they needed a saviour. Friends, Scotland is full of people who reject Jesus today for the exact same reasons.

They have their own ideas of who God is and what he wants and the biblical Jesus doesn't sit easily with their own ideas. They don't want to hear of the biblical Jesus because it would upset their cosy contentment.

They're asleep, happily asleep, far from God and they don't want to be wakened up. They don't want to have to change their lives.

I wonder if there's anyone listening to this service and that is your situation. The light has come into the world but you prefer to remain in the dark.

The light of the world has come, the creator of the world has come to live among us and we don't want him. What about us as believers? Adrian Plass, I don't know if you've read any of Adrian Plass's books, he writes some very funny books about church life, wrote a book called The Visit.

[23 : 40] In it, he imagined Jesus came to visit a modern day congregation, a real, a genuine congregation, like us, or evangelicals somewhere.

And the people had been told he was coming but they hadn't been told what he was like. They were waiting for him but they didn't know what he would look like. And when he came, he didn't fit in at all.

He was totally different from what they expected. He sort of took off his coat and he gave it to a poor man at the door. He just wasn't what they expected.

He didn't fit in at all well. This is a solemn and serious warning to us here. Because Jesus came to his own and his own did not receive him. Would Jesus be happy among us here in Livingston free?

Would he be? I know he's here, I know he lives in our hearts but as a fellowship. The creator of all things walked the roads of Palestine and they did not recognize him and they crucified him.

[24 : 57] If we reject him as they did, if we look for a different Jesus, there isn't one. He is the only one. There is no name given under heaven among men by whom we must be saved.

If you reject Jesus, as many did then and still do today, there is no other way of salvation. salvation. So, we come to the end of this passage for this evening.

John's goal in writing was that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that by believing you may have life in his name. This morning we saw that Jesus is the eternal word, that he became flesh and he lived for a while among us.

This afternoon, there are our points. He came to bring light into darkness. He came to bring us into the family of God. He came to bring grace and truth. He came but how was he received?

He wasn't. He was rejected. Let me close by reminding you of that verse in Matthew 11 28. Wonderful invitation.

[26 : 13] Come to me, Jesus said, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. May God bless his word to all our hearts. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for that invitation, that invitation to come to you. Lord, we, who know you, we want to come, keep coming every day to come to you, Lord, and commit ourselves to you and dedicate our lives to you.

Oh, Father, bless your word to our hearts. If there's anyone, Lord, who does not know you and has listened to this sermon this evening, work in their hearts and open their eyes, Lord, to see their need of a saviour.

Father, we thank you that you are a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God. Lord, we pray you'll take us now as we shortly leave, that you'll go with us, that you'll help us in our homes, in our work, in our schools, you'll be with us and help us to live for you in the week ahead.

[27 : 40] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.