

The Word was with God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2014

Preacher: Peter Naylor

[0 : 00] Today, and in the next couple of days, I want to concentrate on the Gospel of John.

And as we do that, we need to remember John's aim. John has told us plainly what his aim is.

At the end of the Gospel, near the end of the Gospel, we read, These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

There is a clear, sharp focus in John's mind that he wants us to keep our eyes upon Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

He wants us to know him, and he wants us to believe in him, that we may have eternal life.

[1 : 28] I think that purpose is echoed, or John is echoing, the prayer of our Lord Jesus before he came to the cross.

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

And that is John's aim, that we might know the Lord Jesus Christ and God, the only true God in him. And when I think about John's aim, I believe that John was peculiarly prepared to write this Gospel.

God shapes his workmen. And this man, we know that he was directed and inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, but God shaped this man to write this Gospel.

This is the one known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And he was the one who leaned upon Jesus' breast at that first supper, even closer to him than Simon Peter.

[2 : 47] Peter had to ask him, to ask the Lord, a question about the betrayer. It seems, if we read the text carefully, that although the disciples fled from Jesus when he was arrested, it seems that this was the disciple who went after him and went into the high priest's house, and into the place where Jesus was placed on trial.

And he observed the trial. And we certainly know that this disciple was the one who was stood by the cross of Christ, observing him in his sufferings.

This was the disciple to whom our Lord Jesus committed the care of his mother. Behold your son. Behold your mother.

And we need to realize that God placed John in a special position, so that these things may be put before us.

And I ask you, and I put it to myself, surely when we think about John's aim, surely that is our desire. Is it not true that our hearts sound at our men to John?

[4 : 09] When he writes like this, I want you to know the Son of God, don't we respond with the words of Solomon, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

That is how a Christian receives these things. Now, this afternoon, I only want to draw your attention to two basic things that John teaches us.

First of all, I want you to notice John's starting point. All through the Gospel, he has a starting point. And the starting point is the same starting point that we find in the Lord Jesus' own words and mind.

His starting point, as he considers Christ, and as he presents Christ to us, his starting point is in the relationship of the Son to the Father.

He doesn't begin with the Lord's relationship to us. He begins with the Lord's relationship to God the Father. And we see this right at the beginning of the Gospel.

[5 : 26] We read these words, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And perhaps when you remember those words, perhaps you, like me, often want to emphasize the last sentence.

The Word was God. When John writes these words, he's taking us into eternity, in the beginning, before all things were made. Let's look at him, in the beginning, and we see that he was God.

And perhaps we are drawn to emphasize that statement, that he is God, by the struggles the early church had in defending and establishing his deity and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Perhaps, if, I don't know if this happens here, but it certainly does in Cardiff, where the Jehovah's Witnesses come and knock on your door, and they are going to tell you that they are Christians, but they deny the deity of Christ, often we go back to a verse like this, and we say, yes, but the Word was God.

And so we are drawn to emphasize that. But, today, I want to draw your attention to what is said before that, and is actually said twice.

[6 : 57] John uses these words twice, that he was with God. In the beginning, you see this in verse 1, in the beginning was the Word, and these are the words, and the Word was with God.

The Word was with God. And verse 2, he was in the beginning with God. And, I think, maybe, sometimes we skip over words like that when we should pay them close attention.

The expression that he was with God is a very interesting expression. John had at least five ways of saying that.

with God and he chose one particular way. The word with expresses motion towards.

And when John writes what he does, the word was with, as it were, moving towards God. He makes a stop and pause and think, why did he choose this unusual way of expressing this truth?

[8 : 16] Motion towards God. And, immediately, we have to realize that John is trying to teach us something spiritual by using very graphic physical language.

John does this. he uses language which physically would startle us and it does not fit what we know of God. But, he uses it because he wants us to see certain things about the Son of God.

And, so, he uses this language, we would say, language of accommodation. He is accommodating our smallness and he says, the word was with God, with God.

And, he's painting a picture of the Son, as it were, facing towards the Father. Not just facing towards the Father, but drawn to the Father.

This is the picture that he's trying to paint for us. The Son of God facing the Father and drawn to the Father. And, he wants us to understand, first of all, that the Son of God knew the Father.

[9 : 34] He knew the Father. Not only that, but the Son of God loved the Father. The Son loved the Father, and the Father loved the Son.

Now, John is teaching us that there is an intimate knowledge of God the Father in the Son. He knows him intimately.

the Son of God knows the Father in a perfect way. It is a perfect comprehension of the Father.

We need to, as it were, drive our minds back into the depths of eternity, and there we need to realize that the Father and the Son are there in this relationship of intimate, perfect comprehension and knowledge.

The Son of God knows the Father as no one else knows except the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but we are given a picture of the perfect union of the three persons of the Godhead.

[10 : 46] The Father and the Son were one. Not only were they one being, but they were one in their relationship. There is an immense oneness and unity to the Father and the Son.

Later, when John would write in his letter, God is love, God is love, his starting point must be that there is love between the Father and the Son.

He, as it were, takes us into the existence of God and he makes us think about the triunity of God and the perfection of love within the Godhead.

We can say, in our own stumbling way, we can say that the love of the Father for the Son and the love of the Son for the Father is a pure love.

It is unmixed with anything, any shadow of weakness, any element of change. It is pure and enduring. It is the height of love ever known in existence.

[11 : 54] And this is what John is beginning to introduce us to. He is saying to us, think about the relationship of this Jesus of Nazareth who is the Son of God from eternity.

Think of him with the Father. He was with God. And then in verse 18 of this chapter he uses another phrase which brings us back to the same truth.

He says he was in the bosom of the Father. He was in the bosom of the Father. Again, the language is graphic, physical, accommodating, and it brings us to this spiritual reality.

If you want to know Jesus, if you want to know the Son of God, the Messiah, you have to know that he is in the bosom of the Father.

the early church leaders whose first language was Greek, they wrestled with this phrase because it is so physical.

[13 : 05] They spoke about being in the womb. It is such a graphic language, but we know, and they knew, that John is using this language to teach us the intimacy and the unity, the union and the communion of Father with the Son and Son with the Father.

And we can say today that this place that the Son has in the bosom of the Father, it was never, ever altered. We do not say that he was once there and has left it.

no, neither the incarnation nor the crucifixion altered this eternal and unchangeable fact that the Son is in the bosom of the Father.

Now, when we read the Gospel and we listen to our Lord Jesus Christ speaking to the people around him, he more than once comes to them and says this, he says, you do not know him, but I know him.

And that is really John's starting point. He wants us to understand that the identity of Jesus is first of all understood in his intimate knowledge, love, and communion with the Father.

[14 : 36] And that's the first thing. I want to draw your attention to this phrase at the beginning of the Gospel. in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

He was in the beginning with God. And if I can begin among you with this emphasis, if I can write that phrase in your memories and in your hearts, that the Son of God was with God, with the Father, and he knows him, he knew him, he knew him perfectly, and he loved him perfectly.

And the second thing that I want to say this morning is this, that this, this truth has consequences for the relationship of Jesus to us.

The Son of God is what he is to us, because he is in the bosom of the Father. Father. Now, John, when John speaks about our Lord Jesus, the first word that he uses for him, the first name that he gives him, is the word.

The word. In the beginning was the Son of God, the Messiah. No, in the beginning was the word. And when we think about that way in which John speaks of our Lord, we are made to ask the question, where did John get that name for him?

[16:19] Where did this title of Christ come from? Why did John call him the word? And scholars, as they have looked at this gospel, have come up with all kinds of suggestions.

Some have said that John was drawing on Greek philosophy. Nonsense. Perhaps he was deriving it from the Old Testament, such as Psalm 33, verse 6.

By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. Perhaps he was going back to Genesis chapter 1, verse 3, and God said, let there be light. And that is certainly a good connection.

But what we have to understand is that the name for the Lord Jesus, the word, comes out of the very nature of the gospel itself.

Right throughout the gospel, John is showing us how Jesus is the word of God. God. It's something that John saw in the life of Christ.

[17:36] When John followed him as a disciple, when he went and heard him teach in the synagogues, when he saw the works that he did, he observed him, and the conclusion that John came to, instructed by the Holy Spirit, is that this one is the word of God.

Now, what does he mean? He means that it is in the very nature of our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal the invisible God to us.

This is what John wants us to focus on. The Son of God is revealing God and God the Father to his people.

And so when we read the gospel, we listen to Jesus saying time and time again things like this, my doctrine, my teaching is not mine, but him who sent me.

Repeatedly, Jesus says to the Jews, he says, the teaching that I am giving you, the things that I am speaking to you, I have received from my Father. The Son says nothing of himself but what the Father has given him to say.

[19:04] That is what Christ is constantly saying about his teaching. The things I speak to you, I have heard from my Father. And then when he comes and he works among them, when he changes the water into wine, and when he heals the nobleman's son in Capernaum, by, as it were, by his will, and when he raises Lazarus from the dead, and all of these things, when he does these things, he says to them, the works that I do among you are not my works, but they are the works of him who sent me.

And when you listen to our Lord speaking to them, he is constantly saying, these things are not my own, but I have received them from the Father. And John sums this up in verse 18 of our chapter, he says at the end, he says, no one has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him, or he has made him known.

The word there, he has declared him, is similar to the word we use for exegesis. We come to the scriptures to bring out the meaning, and to show what it is, we call that exegesis, and John is using this word of Christ, revealing the Father, as if he is saying, he has exegeted the Father to us, he has brought the knowledge of God to his people, he has enabled us to see the Father.

no wonder when he is with the disciples, he says to them, have you not known me, Philip? Have I been so long with you, and you have not known me?

He who has seen me, has seen the Father. And John, in chapter 1, verse 14, he says, and this one, the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory.

[21 : 23] And, really, today, that's what I wanted to bring out of John's gospel, and leave with you. You see, the Son of God uniquely was in the position to make the Father known, because the Son of God uniquely, setting aside for a moment the Holy Spirit, that's another matter, the Son of God uniquely knew the Father.

It was the Son of God who was in the bosom of the Father, and he has made him known. Well, what should you and I do with these two truths today?

I hope you can see there's a relationship with them, that our Lord Jesus was able to make the Father known to us, because he knew him.

It was because he was in the bosom of the Father, constantly gazing upon the glorious God, that he could come and reveal him to us.

it was because he heard from the Father that he could speak. It was because he had seen the Father working, that he could work as he did. Everything comes out of that.

[22 : 53] When he came to do the works that he did, he did the works that the Father had given him to do. the first thing that this is meant to cause us to see is the majesty of the Son of God.

The majestic place that he holds in the whole scheme of things. He has come and he has made God known to us and we could never know man at any time has been able to see him.

But he has come in the flesh and he has made him known. And I want you to see that this is part of the great majesty of Christ.

And I want you to see that when we the more we see the great majesty of him in this thing the more we desire him.

It is designed to stoke up to stimulate to fan the flames of our desire for Christ. It is designed to bring us to this gospel and to hear John and say John you want to make this one known to us.

[24 : 36] We want to know him and as we know him we know the father we know God. We are meant to see in this the immense love of God for us in sending his son.

No wonder John wrote in chapter 3 verse 16 that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And yes I know that our minds run on to the cross.

Of course they do that he might lay down his life for us. But part of the giving of the son is that we might know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

God proposes to reveal himself to us and we have received that revelation in Jesus Christ. And so we come and we recognize the majesty of the son of God and we desire him.

Secondly God has God has compelled us to come to his son.

[26 : 02] And he tells us that everything is in him. God has committed to him the sheep.

He has placed all of his elect children in Christ's hands. God has committed to him God did commit to him the great charge of coming and dying at Calvary for those sheep.

God has committed to the son the inheritance of all things. That the worlds the world to come the new heavens and the new earth they are his that is his inheritance his is the kingdom his is the power and his is the glory forever.

God has committed to him judgment that all judgment might reside in the hands of the son and therefore the scripture can say and we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and God has given him the authority to give eternal life to whom he wills.

Everything has been placed as it were in the hands of Jesus Christ the perfect son of God the perfect mediator and finally this morning briefly all of this is designed so that we might worship him.

[27 : 42] John is compelling us to come and worship him. And you know I find it perplexing amazing that John himself once made a mistake a grave mistake in this particular matter.

At the end of the book of Revelation we are told that he fell down to worship the angel who revealed to him the things that he did.

And the angel rebuked this beloved disciple. Worship God. If you are going to throw yourself on the ground in honor give the honor to God and to Christ Jesus whom he has sent.

Let our confession be what Thomas was in the end. My Lord and my God. I pray and I hope that as you contemplate what the Son of God is all of these things that he was in the bosom of the Father and he has made him known.

He has brought the knowledge of God to us and in that knowledge is a saving knowledge. I hope that your response your hearts will be warmed because when we come to the Lord's table that's what we are seeking.

[29 : 10] We seek to know him in the word of God. We seek to know him at the table by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. May we know him better from day to day.

Amen. Amen. All right.