

In the beginning was the Word

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[0 : 00] For a few moments, seeking God's help and God's blessing, let us turn to that passage that we read in the first chapter of John's Gospel, from verse 1 to verse 14, usually given the name of the prologue, the prologue to John's Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made.

There are many people who would agree with me that this is one of the most wonderful pieces of writing that was ever written in this world.

And as we come to study it this afternoon, we feel something of what Moses felt when he was before the burning bush, when God told him to take his sandals off his feet, for the place where he stood was holy ground.

And it's our prayer that in the time given to us here together, that we shall see something of the glory of the Gospel, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 37] There is no doubt at all in the minds of men and women who know anything about the Gospels and about the Word of God, they are all in agreement that this is the work of John the Apostle, that he was the one who wrote the Gospel that bears his name.

John doesn't say to God's name.

As the only Savior of sinners. And this is the aim that he had as he began his Gospel. And this is clear from what he says at the very end of the Gospel, in chapter 20 and verse 31.

But these things, he says, 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.

Throughout the 21 chapters of John's Gospel, the name of Jesus is mentioned 247 times.

[3 : 18] John was keen on using the name Jesus when he was writing. It's his human name and reminds us of his humanity.

Remember how the angel said to Joseph, you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. But no one could ever accuse John of stressing the humanity of Jesus at the expense of his divinity.

Because the Gospel of John is one of the most spiritual and one of the most profound of the four Gospels.

In verses 1 to 14 we have given to us here the explanation of all that is going to follow afterwards.

And what John writes after this proves the accuracy of those glorious verses. I want just to highlight two or three things regarding these 14 verses.

[4 : 29] For in them we have, first of all, the eternity of Christ brought before us. And then we have the personality of Christ. And finally the incarnation of Christ.

These things that you may take with you and might be helpful to you as you remember these verses. The eternity, the personality and the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

First of all then, the eternity of Christ. In the beginning was the word. In other words, before creation took place or the universe was made, the word was already in existence.

Matter and material things are not eternal. They are transitory and only last for a while. They were made at a point, a certain point in time.

They are fleeting. They are passing. They were all created at a specific point. As this pulpit was, some joiner came along and put this pulpit together.

[5 : 52] But the day will come when this pulpit will have run its course and there will be a new pulpit perhaps here. We won't see it, but if God doesn't come again in Jesus Christ at the end of the world, this pulpit will be exchanged for a newer version.

But the word existed before all things that are visible and invisible. Before the angels were created, he was there.

Before the universe was made, he was there. We can trace the history of this world back to its beginning by certain special events that are on record in the Bible.

Things like the children of Israel being in Egypt as slaves. Then Abraham. And right back you find the fall of Adam.

You can trace all these things from the scriptures to the very beginning of time and creation. But the opening verse of this passage brings us to a gulf that we are unable to bridge by human wisdom or human intellect.

[7 : 25] Here we come to the deep mysteries of the Godhead. And when we come to mysteries like that in the Bible, the best thing for us to do is to fall down before God and worship.

When you come up against some deep mystery of God in the Bible as you read it and you can't understand it, then the best thing for you to do is not to skip over it, but to bow down and worship.

And thank God that he is greater than anything that we can understand. If we could understand everything about God, then we would be like God ourselves.

But we thank him that he is so mysterious and so wonderful that the best human mind cannot grasp all that is involved in him.

And therefore you see John's Gospel account begins by speaking about the life of Christ before he came into this world as a tiny little baby in Bethlehem.

[8 : 38] He was there before the world was made, before time began. He was in existence. And that life that he lived prior to his coming into this world was a glorious life, a wonderful life, a life of infinite delight and infinite blessedness.

And there he was in the company of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, fully content in every sense of the word.

But then God wanted to lavish his love on his people that he had chosen from all eternity and that he had given to the Son as a gift of his love.

And the Son was to come to save them from their sins. The Gospel is glorious and wonderful.

And we never get tired of thinking about it and preaching on it as well. Now the noun that we see here being used arrests our attention right away.

[9 : 59] It's something unusual, the word. For only John uses this term when speaking of Christ. The word.

In the beginning was the word. It's the Greek word logos. And it's really rooted in Hebrew and Semitic thought rather than in Greek.

In the Old Testament, the word of God is sometimes represented as a person. As in Psalm 33 and at verse 6.

There the psalmist says, By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He is made out to be a person.

The word of God. Now a word does many things. A word gives expression to what you are thinking of in your mind and in your heart.

[11 : 07] Nobody knows what you are thinking about until you put your thinking into words. And then people begin to understand.

And a word reveals what we are thinking about to the people round about us. We don't know what they are thinking about until they put it into words.

And we can say that Jesus Christ is the word of God in that sense. For he expresses something of the mind of God to us.

And he reveals to us what God is like. He reveals to us what the Father is like. He is the word. Jesus said himself.

He who has seen me has seen the Father. I have shown to you, he says in other words, what the Father is thinking about. What the Father is planning for you.

[12 : 14] Now notice also the verb in the opening sentence. In the beginning was the word. The verb was is in the imperfect tense which speaks of something that is continuous.

It goes on and on. It describes something that cannot be measured by what we call time. Time is only the marking off of eternity to help us until we reach eternity.

We won't need watches and clocks in eternity. We'll leave them all behind. But until we reach eternity, our clocks and our watches help us.

But the animal kingdom, the cows and the sheep in the fields, they don't have watches, they don't have clocks.

They don't need them. They belong to time. And therefore, they don't need to measure time. But we don't belong to time. We belong to eternity.

[13 : 27] And until we reach eternity, we will need to measure time. To help us along. Therefore, we learn from all this that Jesus Christ did not begin to be the Son of God when he was born in the stable at Bethlehem.

He was the Son of God before he came into this world. Angels are the sons of God by creation.

Redeemed sinners are the sons and daughters of God by adoption. But Jesus was the unique, the only begotten Son of God by eternal generation.

And who can grasp and who can fathom what that means? In Psalm 2 and at verse 7, we hear God speaking there and saying, You are my Son.

Today I have begotten you. Today. Can you explain what that word today means? Well, I can't.

[14 : 47] And the best mind in the world can't either. Here is a depth that we have no adequate plumb line to fathom.

We cannot fathom the depth that we find here. So we have the eternity of Christ before us in these verses.

But we also have, as I said, the personality of Christ taken before us. And the word was with God.

And the word was with God. The word with there means in communion with God. Or in intimate fellowship with God.

In past eternity, Jesus Christ, the word, was in complete and intimate fellowship with God.

[15 : 50] This comes out in Genesis chapter 1, verse 26. Where we hear God saying, Let us make man in our image and in our likeness.

They were talking to one another. And then again in Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 8.

I also heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Who will go for us? The Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In the words of John chapter 1, verse 1. We could translate them like this. And the word was face to face with God. In the most close and intimate fellowship with God.

In past eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ had fellowship with the Father at the forefront of his mind.

[16 : 58] Even that night when he was betrayed and taken out to be crucified. In his prayer to the Father, you remember in chapter 17 of John.

And at verse 5. We hear him say, And now, O Father, glorify me together with yourself. With the glory which I had with you before the world was.

Father, remember the fellowship I had with you before I came into this world. Before the world was created. That's what he said. That's what he's saying.

And the more we think about these things, the more clearly it becomes that it was sheer love that made him leave that fellowship in heaven with the Father and with the Holy Spirit to come into this world.

This evil, dark, sinful world. And in this glorious fellowship, Jesus enjoyed the same status as God.

[18 : 02] He wasn't the little boy and the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was on the same level as the Father and the Holy Spirit. He had the same status as the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He was on the same level as the Holy Spirit. He was on the same level as the Holy Spirit. And the word was God. That's what it says here. And in verse 2, his full deity, his eternity and his distinct personal existence are confessed when it says he was in the beginning with God.

The word with there speaks of united activity. Not just nearness, but united activity.

He was active with God in eternity. Co-operating with God. For then it goes on to say all things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made.

All things. Recognising everything coming into being individually. And he was the agent of everything that was made.

[19 : 20] Nothing was made without him. He was the agent behind all of creation. Now this confirms two things. It confirms to us that Christ himself was not created.

And it also confirms to us that all things visible and invisible were made by him. So he who was there from all eternity created all the things visible and invisible that we see and touch and handle.

Listen to Paul as he writes to the Colossians. Chapter 1 and verse 16 and 17. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

Because all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things consist.

He is the one through whom God acted in the beginning. And he is the one through whom God acts yet to this very day.

[20 : 38] He is the fountainhead of all life. In him was life. From all eternity life resided in the sun, the world.

And this takes in physical life as well as spiritual life. From all eternity there was founded in the fullness of God.

Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ, he bestowed the honour of being the saviour of his people.

before time began. Oh, he's so different. He's so different from the idols of this world who are dead and dumb and they can't hear you, they can't see you, they can't help you in any way.

But here is a living, loving, gracious saviour. And when the life that is in him is manifested, then it is called light.

[21 : 54] In him was life and the life was the light of men. He's not only alive, different from the idols, but he is life-giving.

He gives life and he is life. And when it is manifested, it is called light. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

Now, light is pure, gentle, pure and revealing and all pervasive.

When you put on the lights of the church here, the light goes into every corner, lights up every corner of the place. And when the grace of God touches us who are by nature in darkness because of the fall, then we see things in a way that we never saw them before.

Never before. And that's what happens at conversion when a person becomes a Christian. The light of the glory of God and of the grace of God comes into the heart and into the soul of that sinner.

[23 : 16] And he sees things that he never saw before. And he'll say to you, Oh, I see it now. I could never see it before.

But I know now. I can see it now. And it's a thrilling thing for a minister of the gospel to have somebody come to his study or to his manse asking help with regard to salvation for his soul.

And when you sit down with him and explain the gospel to that person and pray with him, at the end of it he may say to you, Well, I never saw it before now, but I see it so clearly.

Why does that happen? Not because the minister who was speaking to him was a great person in any way that was able to show him the way, but because the light of the gospel came into his life and he began to see things that he had never seen before and he goes out the door saying, Thank you very much.

I see things now a lot more clearer than ever. Arise and shine we hear Isaiah writing in chapter 60 verse 1 For your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

[24 : 46] Christ the Word was the light of the world in the Old Testament dark times and in the Old Testament dispensation.

But even in the Old Testament dispensation there were flashes of that light coming through. The promise given in the Garden of Eden that one would come who would bruise the head of the serpent a light flashed.

Passover lamb another flash the brazen serpent of Moses another flash the sacrifices other flashes even in the Old Testament the light which was in Christ was revealing itself just like a lightning flash.

Now in verse 5 the darkness is mentioned for the first time and the light shines in darkness. darkness. Now there are two ways to create darkness.

There are two ways by which darkness can come. Darkness can come with the absence of light. Switch the lights off here when it's night time and then darkness comes.

[26 : 16] That's one way. The other way is if we lose our sight we are in darkness. darkness. So darkness can come in these two ways by the removal of the light and by blindness.

Now the darkness that John mentions here was caused by loss of sight for when man fell he was blinded as a result.

He lost his sight spiritually as well as many other things. He was blinded by sin by the fall and although the light was shining around him in providence he was too blind to see it.

God was there in providence God was there in creation but man was too blind to see.

It says the darkness did not comprehend it. That means more than did not understand it. It's true that the darkness did not understand it but the darkness did not overcome it.

[27 : 31] the darkness in every age is actively opposed to the light. Every age. That's the reason why people hate the gospel because they don't want the light.

They're opposed to the light naturally. Now before God sent his son into the world to illumine the hearts of men and women he raised up a man called John the Baptist to prepare the way and to be the forerunner of his own son Jesus Christ.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John verse 6. Now John didn't come with a new message. He came to speak to men and women about the light that was already with them but there were too blind to see it.

And the emphasis in verse 7 is on Jesus for he is the light that is referred to by John. This man came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all through him might believe.

John was not that light. He was only a reflector of the light. And the intention was that those who heard him preaching would come to believe in the Messiah in Jesus Christ and accept him as their own personal saviour.

[29 : 14] Christ is called in verse 9 the true light that gives light to every man coming into the world. Christ does this when God takes the teachings of Christ and applies it to the hearts and lives of men and women.

They will never be the same again once they have heard the gospel. Whatever they do with the gospel, supposing they reject the gospel, they'll never be the same again.

Anybody who has heard the gospel will never be the same again. And that's the fearful thing when you have to stand before God at the last to give account what did you do with the teachings of the gospel.

The majority of people do not accept the light, they prefer darkness instead. It's only when the sheer sovereign grace of God touches us, that we begin to see things differently.

And we'll want the light, we'll want more of the light then. Why is it that when a person is at the very infancy of his Christian life, that he starts going to the prayer meeting during the week?

[30 : 41] He's wanting more light, more of the word of God. He wants to see more about Jesus and hear more about Jesus.

He wants to embrace all that God offers in the gospel. The personality of Christ. And then verse 10 speaks of the incarnation of Christ.

Christ. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him. And that is so sad. The one who created the world, the world did not want to know him.

The Jewish nation did not accept Jesus as being the one that God had promised to send, the Messiah. he came to his own, and his own did not receive him.

And they are still refusing to accept him to this very day. They are still looking for the Messiah to come, when he has already come 2,000 years ago.

[31 : 54] But the Jews are not the only ones to blame. They are not alone in this sin, for there are those to whom Christ has come in the preaching of the gospel, and they haven't accepted him, they haven't believed him, they haven't trusted in him.

In our very congregations, here in this lovely island, that is steeped in the gospel, there are those who have yet to believe in Jesus and trust in him, from our congregations.

That's the sad thing. Oh, it's sad that the Jews are not accepting him. But what about the people of Point? There are some that haven't accepted him yet.

And yet we see that even in these far-off days, not everybody rejected Christ. And thank God that there are those who are to this day closing in with the free offer of the gospel in Christ.

Christ. Some believed and trusted in him and became his followers. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name.

[33 : 16] And there are those who are believing yet in our midst. One here, one there. that we long for a whole dozen and hundred thousands to believe in him and be swept into the kingdom.

Oh, that we would live to see a day of God's right hand and that hundreds, thousands would be ushered into the kingdom. They become children of God, not by any physical right or biological poor.

He gives them the right, he gives them the authority to become his children. It doesn't matter what nationality they come from or what colour of skin they have, in his sovereignty, God is taking them in, making them to be his children.

They're born again in the spiritual sense. and more of this is happening in other parts of the world like Africa and places like that than is happening in this country of ours.

But then at verse 14 where we stop to reading, there's the climax, the climax of the chapter. We come to the very heart of Christianity itself, and the world was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

[34 : 54] From being with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the glory of eternity, Jesus the word comes into the world, this world of suffering and of sin.

he pitches his tent among us, is what one of the writers says about it, about this verse.

Veiled in flesh, the Godhead seen. The one who walked the streets of Galilee was the same one that was with the Father and with the Holy Spirit in heaven in glory.

The essence of his body, of his being, and there went no change whatsoever. He took upon himself a human body with all its weaknesses, yet without sin.

He became flesh, not in the sense that he stopped being what he was before. For he assumed the human nature without laying aside his divine nature.

[36 : 10] He was divine and human at the same time as he walked among men. And John testifies that he met him and that he saw him with others who were with him.

And it was glorious, he says. It was full of grace and truth. We beheld his glory. That word beheld means to inspect closely.

As a watchmaker puts on the magnifying glass and looks into the heart of a clock or a watch and closely sees what's wrong, what's keeping the clock from working.

and the glory of his being shone on occasions through the veil of his humanity. When he performed miracles such as the turning of the water into wine and the marriage of Cana in Galilee, it says there he manifested his glory.

As he dealt with the little children, they were trying to get away from him and told them, off you go home, what are you doing here? Jesus said, suffer the little children to come to me.

[37 : 32] His glory was seen there. As he treated the broken hearted, his glory was seen.

In his teachings, his glory was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Gethsemane, and eventually on the cross, his glory was revealed.

In the garden, when he was arrested, you remember, his enemies came to arrest him. Who are you looking for? Jesus of Nazareth, I am he.

And they fell backwards before him. His glory was seen. And the disciples saw his glory on the day of his resurrection, and on the day of his ascension.

John is now an old man, as he writes his gospel account, and he says, oh, it was full of grace and truth. I'll never forget it, he says, full of grace and truth.

[38 : 48] And he has not changed. He is the same today as he was when he was here on earth. He is the only begotten son of God who still comes and sits and eats with sinners.

See him dealing with the woman caught in adultery. My dear, he said, your sins are forgiven you. That's grace.

When you get something you don't deserve, that's grace. Mercy is keeping from you what you do deserve.

That's mercy. But then truth, sin no more is there to her. Your sins are forgiven to you.

Grace, sin no more. Truth. I want to ask you a question. Have you met with him personally yet?

[39 : 57] The most wonderful thing that can happen to anybody in this world is to meet with Jesus by his saving grace that God would bring us into his own family?

I'd rather be a Christian today than have all the riches that are in this world. They are nothing compared to Christ, the pearl of great price.

No wonder the parable speaks about the eternity of Christ, the personality of Christ, the incarnation of Christ.

May God bless to us these few thoughts on this word. Let us bow in prayer. Gracious Heavenly Father, we pray that you would take your word and apply it to all our hearts.

love and love and hear more about Jesus. That's what we need to hear more about him and of his love and of the mystery of his incarnation and the mystery of his atonement.

[41 : 09] Who can fathom it? Oh Lord, bless us. Go before us into the evening service. In Jesus' name. Amen.