

# The Word, The Witness & the Lamb

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[ 0 : 00 ] In C.S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia, there is a interaction between Lucy and the great lion Aslan. Aslan is, if you're familiar with it at all, he is the Jesus figure in the Narnia Chronicles.

And Lucy approaches Aslan and she gazes into his large but gentle and wise face. And Aslan says to her, welcome child.

Lucy responds, Aslan, you're bigger. Aslan answers, that is because you are older, little one. She questions his response, not because you are.

I am not, he says. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger. Every year you grow, you will find me bigger.

That is, it's an analogy. The bigger Jesus is to us, the more we grow in our understanding of Jesus, the bigger he is to us.

[ 1 : 16 ] And the more central he becomes in our lives, the bigger our sense of purpose will be in our life. Meaning and contentment and passion and the joy will grow more and more the bigger Jesus is to us.

And that's why our purpose here at St. Paul's is to treasure Jesus. And we do it ultimately for our joy. John's massive vision of Jesus has opened the eyes to countless, countless people over the centuries.

To the greatness of Jesus Christ. And it has been equally profound as a gospel.

Equally profound as an impact on Christians. And it expands their vision for the magnificence of who Jesus Christ is. And so as we spend this term working our way through the first 12 chapters, my hope is that we, like Lucy with Aslan, would find Jesus to be bigger and bigger and bigger than we ever imagined.

To move beyond a mere religious response to him. And the more central we see him in our lives, the more abundant our life will become.

[ 2 : 48 ] And today, so therefore, as we come into John chapter 1, I want us to see who Jesus is, the profound change that he brings in our lives and what we need to do about it.

And that's just the first chapter. So St. Paul's app, get that open in front of you. Got three points there. But also your Bibles in John chapter 1. John chapter 1 is one of the most richest and also famous parts of the Bible.

The first 18 verses makes the claim that the rest of the gospel of John explains, defends and supports. John chapter 1. It's John chapter 1.

It's the first 18 verses is the prologue to the whole of the gospel. And the main claim is that the word that was in the beginning became flesh and lived amongst us so that we could bear witness to the word.

That's the main claim. And we are told five things about the word in these verses. The word is a person. The word is a divine person.

[ 4 : 00 ] The word is an eternal divine person. And the word is the eternal divine person who's the source of all things. And lastly, the word is Jesus Christ.

Now you could take five years to explain each of those five statements. But I want to focus on just one of these things that he's picked out.

And that is John's use of the word word. I want us to focus on the word. It's a very interesting way to describe who Jesus is.

The Greek word that John uses here for word is logos. In the beginning was the logos. And the logos came to dwell with us.

It's a word that has an enormous amount of meaning for the first century Greco-Roman world. The Greek philosophers looked at nature.

[ 5 : 06 ] They saw balance. They saw harmony. They saw design. They saw order. And they concluded that there is a cosmic principle of order behind all that they observed.

And they called that principle the logos of the universe. And the logos for Greek philosophers was an impersonal divine structure that brought forth all that we experience in the world.

And that was the foundation of the Greek worldview, which is also the foundation of Western civilization. The Eastern worldview is built on a similar principle of purpose and reason and order behind what we observe.

And so the logos is the purpose. It's the reason. It's the logic, which is where we get the word logos from. We get it from logos. Logic.

Logos. It's the logic behind all things. It is what makes sense of all things. Maybe think of it like this.

[ 6 : 25 ] Most things that we purchase these days comes with a set of manufacturer's instructions. The more complex, the greater the instructions that you have associated with these things.

And the instructions ask how to use and to care for that particular item. They are the manufacturer's purpose for the item. The guidelines how to use it within its purpose.

In other words, the instructions are the logos for the item that we have in front of us. And the use of that item must be aligned to the instructions. To the design.

The reason for its existence. And if you don't use it in line with the logos, at best, you will not get your value out of that item.

At worst, it will be disaster. If you do not plug it into a PowerPoint, but you plug it into a hose, instead, it is not going to work.

[ 7 : 29 ] And at the very least, your warranty is going to be voided. The Greeks concluded that if we align our lives with the logos, life would go well for us.

However, if you don't align your life with the logos, you would at very least experience an emptiness in life.

A discontentment in life. A constant searching in life. At the very worst, you would destroy your life. Now, there are many different versions of what the logos was and how you would align your life to the logos.

As there are today. Everything from living selflessly for the sake of others, for the world and for future generations. And then along comes John.

John the Baptist. With the earth-shattering category of the Christian faith. The logos is not a principle.

[ 8 : 46 ] The logos is a person. To understand the world, to understand all things, you must understand a person.

And this person is the designer and the source of all life. The one who we are to align our lives with. That this person is the truth that sits behind all things. And to live life well, we must have a relationship of love centered on a person.

That is the radical claim of Christianity throughout the centuries. But verses 5 to 11 tell us it's a claim that has faced rejection right from the very beginning.

Verse 9. Have a look at that. The true light that gives light to everyone has come into the world. He was in the world. And though the world was made through him, the world, that's the people, did not recognize him.

[ 9 : 53 ] He came to those which was his own. But his own did not receive him. Verse 5 is the key to understanding the rejection.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Other translations, for those who are familiar with different translations, say that the darkness has not understood it.

In his commentary on this verse, Don Carson says, This verse is a masterpiece of planned ambiguity. That is, the word that John uses here, and he's very careful with all his words, the word he uses here can mean both overcome or understand.

In the same way we might ask, what does it mean to master something? What does it mean when we say, I've mastered that? It may mean that I've overpowered it.

Or it may mean, oh, I finally get it. It may mean both of those things at the same time. I finally get it. I figured it out.

[ 11 : 12 ] And that is, if you like, the ambiguity of this word is that there are two broad categories of rejecting the claims of Jesus Christ. One is an overly hostile. The other is just simply not to get him.

Not to understand him. And either way, you've rejected him. In the post-Christian era that we find ourselves in now, some people are hostile to the idea that Jesus Christ is the truth that sits behind the universe.

Our secular society is increasingly hostile to any idea that there is any form of absolute truth behind the universe.

And in some quarters, there is an attempt to overcome Jesus. Another way to reject Jesus as the logos is the religious approach, the moralistic approach.

It is not to understand Jesus. The religious approach is to see Jesus as laying down a set of rules for life where I need to obey in order to work for his approval.

[ 12 : 25 ] That is to misunderstand the logos. To misunderstand who Jesus is. Relativism and moralism are both forms of rejection of Jesus.

Both leave us looking ultimately to ourselves and the consistency of our own lives for truth and meaning and hope. And that is why we are living in a world with so many fragile egos because it puts me, moralism and relativism, put me at the centre of the universe.

As the truth of the universe. And it's an oppressive weight to bear. On the other hand, what John puts in front of us here is so liberating.

There are hardly more beautiful words in the entire Bible than verses 12 to 14, or 12 and 14. To all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Verse 14, the word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[ 13 : 40 ] The right to become children of God. That's what's at stake here in understanding who Jesus is. The relationship of a parent to a child is not based on the child's performance.

It's not a consumeristic relationship. It's not a cost-benefit relationship. It's a covenant relationship based on unconditional faithfulness and commitment and love from the parent to the child.

And in Jesus understanding him, we have the right to become children of God. In other words, this claim that Jesus is the truth is a non-oppressive truth claim.

And Jesus Christ declares it's possible to have that kind of relationship with the God of the universe. How? Because the logos, the word, became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

The logos of the universe came to us. He hasn't left us to our own devices to navigate life, to try and align ourselves with the manufacturer's purposes.

[ 15 : 12 ] The word that John uses for dwelt here is the word tabernacled amongst us. It's another name for templed amongst us.

And all around this world, through every culture, there are temples. Temples have been built throughout history because people, human beings from every culture have instinctively sensed that there is a God, there is a logos, there is a purpose, there is a being, but there is a gap.

There is a big gap. He is great and we are small. And temples were built in every culture in an attempt to bridge that gap.

Sacrifices were offered. Rituals were performed. And holy people were engaged to bridge the gap for us. And John tells us that the Lord of the universe has now tabernacled with us.

He has bridged the gap himself. Dwelt in our presence. So that we might know who he is. That's the beauty of the claim that Jesus is the word and why we'd want to see and savour him and treasure him for who he is.

[ 16 : 37 ] The heart of the universe is a person. Now one person who saw Jesus, who witnessed Jesus for who he is as the eternal creator God, the source of all life, was John the Baptist.

The first witness to the glory of Jesus Christ as the truth. Now John was a guy who in the first century drew a lot of attention to himself about his preaching and calling people to repent for their sin.

From the servants in the fields to King Herod himself in his palace. From the religious elite to the Roman soldiers. People everywhere were talking about John.

He had more Twitter followers than anyone. Anyone on the face of the earth. Lots of rumours went around about who John was.

That maybe John was the Logos. Could he be the long awaited Jewish Messiah who would rescue God's people from slavery?

[ 17 : 47 ] Is he in fact the hope of humanity? The savior of the nation? Verse 20, he said, not me. Well maybe he's the great Elijah, the prophet that Malachi predicted that was going to come just

before the Messiah.

Is John the Elijah figure from Malachi? Nope, I'm not him either. Well what about the prophet? The promised prophet from Deuteronomy who would lead God's people to a new day of dawn?

Nope, I'm not him either. Who are you John? What are we going to say about you? How do you explain you John? In all of your greatness and your millions of tweets who are you?

I'm a voice. Nothing special at all. I'm a voice. And yet you read Matthew chapter 11 and we get a very different picture of who John is according to Jesus Christ.

This is Jesus' assessment of John. Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you. And more than a prophet. This is the one to whom it is written.

[ 19 : 02 ] This is Malachi. I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you. I tell you. I tell you. Among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.

That's Jesus' assessment of John. He's worthy of all these millions of Twitter followers. Jesus' assessment of John is profoundly different than John's assessment of John.

After the arrival of Jesus, this is what Jesus says, among those born of women, which is quite a lot of people as it turns out, there has not been anyone greater than John.

No one greater than John. Jesus says he is, in fact, the Elijah figure that Malachi predicted.

So how do you reconcile those two perspectives? Is John just someone that we might call in our modern day someone with low self-esteem? Or maybe someone who's got a false humility.

[ 20 : 21 ] Yeah, not really about me. Well, this is not at all. It's not at all the case because as we go through John's gospel, we will see that someone with low self-esteem and false humility would be incredibly fearful and would lack an element of confidence.

And John, therefore, would not be calling the religious elite to the Roman soldiers to herod himself in his palace to repent and to follow Jesus Christ. That is not someone of low self-esteem who would have that kind of boldness and brashness.

What's happening here is that John, who bears witness to the Logos, sees himself against Jesus and says, I am nothing. I may be the greatest human being who's ever walked the face of the earth up to Jesus, but I am nothing.

Compared to Jesus. He's saying to the crowd, you've missed the point. It's not about me. You've missed the point.

It's not about me. I am merely a voice announcing a greater one. I've seen the Logos. The great one is verse 23, the Lord.

[ 21 : 36 ] And here John uses the covenant name of Israel's God, Yahweh. Verse 27 is the key to understanding John's understanding of himself in the presence of Jesus.

He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie. First century Palestine was a hot, dusty, dirty, mucky place.

By the end of the day, your feet would stink bad. I actually put originally in my text, really bad, but Microsoft wanted to correct that for being bad grammar.

But I want to say really, really, really bad. Really bad. And there were, in fact, Jewish laws that said you could not demand a servant or a worker or a disciple to untie your sandals unless they were a Gentile dog.

They weren't allowed to untie your sandals. It was seen as so disgusting in first century.

[ 22 : 58 ] And every culture's got their things which we would describe as disgusting. And it was so disgusting in first century Palestine. They had laws against it. And notice what John says here.

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, I am only worthy to untie his sandal.

He actually says, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandal. He's saying to his audience here, I am lower than even the Gentile dogs in the face of Jesus Christ.

He's saying, you, my Twitter account serves his glory. That's why I'm here. I'm below the lowest of the Gentiles.

I understand the greatness of Jesus Christ. Don't try and understand my greatness. My life is to draw attention to him. My purpose is to bring him glory, not myself.

[ 24 : 04 ] He is the logos. He is the purpose. He is the meaning, the reason for the universe. He is the meaning. But John also bears witness to Jesus Christ, not just as the logos of the universe who has come to dwell amongst his creation, but he also bears witness to how the logos has come to his

creation and why he's come to his creation.

He doesn't come as a devouring great lion that needs to be appeased, but as a lamb.

Now the relativist rejects the idea of a powerful divine designer. The moralist misunderstands that the powerful designer behind the universe is in fact a lamb.

The logos is not just great but also good. Verse 29, he points to Jesus and says, look, this is John, look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Exclamation mark in the original Greek text, look. Other versions have got, behold.

[ 25 : 31 ] John's Jewish audience knew exactly what he was saying when he said that. Centuries earlier when they were slaves in Egypt, Moses went to Pharaoh and said, let my people go and Pharaoh refused to let them go and God sent a bunch of plagues to convince Pharaoh and all of Egypt and the final plague on Egypt because of their oppression and their rebellion and their injustice was an angel of death to strike down the firstborn son in every home.

that was devastating for the hopes of a patriarchal society who pinned their hopes on the firstborn son and God also said to his people Israel, don't forget your sinners too.

It's not because you're better. The only way that they could escape the same fate was if they were to kill a lamb and have its blood spread on the doorposts of their homes and when the angel of death sees the blood he will pass over the house and they will not be slain for their sin.

In other words the lamb died so that the family didn't have to and from that very night year after year century after century Israel celebrated the Passover meal and remembered the night that they didn't have to pay for their sin but how is it possible that a little lamb could possibly atone for the sin of an individual or of a nation of a world how is that possible?

You see John and his Jewish heroes would have also been quite familiar with another figure in the Old Testament that the book of Isaiah calls the suffering servant and Isaiah says this about the suffering servant we all like sheep have gone astray each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all he was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and John goes both of those images come together in the person of Jesus I'm channeling together in the person of Jesus the suffering servant is the sacrificial lamb for sin the logos of the universe is the suffering servant and he says behold look get it understand it the reason why our firstborn sons didn't die in

[ 28 : 28 ] Egypt and you don't need to now is because God has offered his own son as the sacrificial lamb and as he says to his hearers in the first century so he says to us now in the 21st look behold gaze think ponder understand get it who Jesus is he is the logos and the lamb for your joy the logos of the universe has sacrificed himself so that we can be free and loved and known and approved get it and get abundant life you see this news is news that humbles you that

Jesus is the truth that he is the lamb it humbles you because that's what it took for God to deal with our rejection of him but it also lifts you up because his love for us is so great that he was in fact willing to do it in Jesus Christ for all of us fragile egocentric people trying to find the truth in ourselves Jesus Christ in him we receive the praise of the praise worthy we receive the love of the lovable and that fills you up on the inside it's the source of abundant life it's the reason John is so bold and so confident and yet so deeply humble it's why the whole trajectory of his life has shifted to him being just a voice the greatest priority in his life is to be a voice a voice to

Jesus Christ when Jesus said that John is the greatest one born of women until now he added something that I didn't include the first time around let me include it the second time among those born of women there had not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he the greatest in the world up to Jesus was John the Baptist but those who trust in Jesus on his terms are in fact greater than John the Baptist how can that be well ask yourself the question why was John so great why was he great it's because he was a voice he was the first to grasp the greatness of Jesus Christ and he did it better than anyone else up to that point but every single

Christian sits on this side of the death and resurrection of Jesus and it means that we have a greater capacity right now to understand to grasp who Jesus is for our joy and to experience the boldness of the confidence and the humility of John the Baptist to the degree that we behold who Jesus is we look to Jesus understand Jesus is the degree to which we will align our lives with him and it will be the degree to which we experience joy in this life right now to the degree that we grow in the abundant life is the degree also that we will be a voice to the greatness and the goodness of the life that is in Jesus going to to the heaven him it his oh glory to the motherfuck to the another

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