

In the Beginning Was the Word

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[0 : 00] In the Gospel of John, John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and so on.

The Gospel of John is a massive book, and it's a book that I've often wanted to spend a bit of time in and with, and yet I've always hesitated coming to it just because of how huge and how deep it is, because as you begin to look at it, you feel that you could spend years just working through.

But I intend to spend a wee bit of time looking at this Gospel in large sections. It doesn't mean that I'll never go back and look at maybe individual or little verses here and there, but I want to look at it in large sections.

We've gone through Luke not that very long time back, and while Luke is a wonderful account of the life and ministry of Jesus, the Gospel of Luke, although it's unique in its own way, there's a lot of similarities with Matthew and Mark.

But John tends to be different to the other three Gospel writers. And John, of course, while it's much more a theological book, it's a book that sets out for us, I think very clearly at the end, part of the main purpose and intent of it, because John writes at the end of the book in chapter 20, he says, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[2 : 07] So I think in many ways this is at the very heart of why John, or the purpose of John's writing, is read that last little bit that he's written there, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Now, as we know, the beginning of John's Gospel is very different to the beginning of the other Gospels, where we have, in Matthew and Luke, we have genealogies. Mark tends to just launch straight in, and dealing with John the Baptist, and straight into Jesus.

Here John goes way back, and he doesn't just go back to follow the genealogy and the lineage of Jesus, but he goes right back to the beginning.

Not just to the beginning of creation, but right back to the beginning, the unending beginning, right back to, right into eternity. And so John takes us to places that we cannot really understand.

You know, that's one of the wonderful things about faith. That faith takes you to places where you, that you cannot actually measure. If somebody says to you, can you explain, can you fully explain to me what some of these things mean?

[3 : 36] You have to say to yourself, well, no, I can't. But I believe them. I am so persuaded of them. I know them to be true. They are so true to me, and I am so persuaded of the reality of them.

And it's as if, even although I cannot fully understand it, I believe it, it's part and partial of my life. I stake my very life upon it.

That's what faith does. Faith takes what is far greater than ourselves and takes it to become part of us.

And this is part of what we're doing here, because it takes us to this beginning. And when you come to read the beginning of John, it's very similar to Genesis, going way back in the beginning.

And it shows us here that Jesus Christ isn't somebody that was created, as it were, at the beginning of the world.

[4 : 44] Some people think that that's when the second, when the Son of God came into being, was at the time of the creation. It shows us here very clearly that the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead Christ, is God of very God.

It tells us here that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. You see, the Word never had a beginning.

The Word is co-eternal with the Father. He is not, we've got to see that, He is not the Father, because He is with the Father.

But He is one with the Father. Short of Catechism puts it beautifully, although that's not what John is actually dealing with here, with regard to the three persons, but as our short of Catechism, remember, tells us that there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And that these three are one, same in substance, equal in power and glory. So John is at pains to help us to understand that the Son of God, that the second person of the Godhead, is not somebody who was brought into being at a particular point.

[6 : 03] The second person of the Godhead took human nature at a particular point. when He came into this world, in what we term the Incarnation, when He was born into this world, where two natures and the one person.

And these things, as we said, they're mysteries. The Bible says that to us, great is the mystery of godliness, Christ manifest in the flesh.

And that's why I was saying, faith takes us to places that we cannot understand. If you understand a mystery, it's no longer a mystery.

If you're able to unravel and to explain every detail of a mystery, the mystery has gone. And that's why Christ, coming in the flesh, although we lay hold upon it, we believe it, faith just takes it completely into our heart, our life, it's our everything, yet it still remains a mystery.

There is an element of mystery attached to it all. And so, we find here that John is telling us that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[7 : 22] And that there was this idea that the Word was face-to-face, toward God, giving the idea of fellowshiping, giving the idea of this oneness, of moving towards, of operating in oneness.

And then we see that what the Word, the Word was God, and the Word was with God, and we see that what the Word has done.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

And you see, this is what love does. Here is the manifestation of God's love. Because this world that we live in is a manifestation of God's love.

And if we were going back to Genesis, we can almost see the discussion in the Godhead of the purposing, of the planning, of the bringing of this world into being.

[8 : 32] Like, for instance, it's recorded for us where it says, let us make man in our own image. It's like a discussion. Here's a discussion in the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit discussing, let us, let us make man in our own image.

And so this is what love does. Love, love, love is demonstrative. Love does. And the making of this world, and the making of us, is all a demonstration of God's love.

Of course, the greatest demonstration of all is the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. But the very formation, the very declaration of God's love is seen in the making of this world.

And I cannot think of anything that's more extraordinary than people rejecting the living and true God.

When you think of what God has done, we are here in this amazing world because of the purpose and the plan and the authority and the word of God.

[9 : 52] No other reason. This is the simple reason for our existence is because God purposed and planned it. And our daily living is by His will because we are told that it is in Him that we live and we move and we have our being.

And yet the amazing thing is that there are many people who not only don't believe that, but are doing their utmost to try and deny the very existence of the God who holds their very life in the hollow of His hand and who has given them every good thing that they have ever had in this world. Because we are told very clearly in the Bible, what do you have that you have not received? That is one of the most humbling verses in the Scripture which brings us to realize that we have nothing either through our gifts or our abilities or our achievements, whatever a passion has, they have because God has enabled them to receive it.

As the Lord said, we have said it before, as Israel were going into the land of promise, He said to them, whatever you do, don't forget me. Because, He said, you are going to go in and you are going to build good houses and your gold and your silver will multiply, your cattle will multiply, you will have loads of corn and wine and all these good things that you didn't have in the wilderness,

beware that you forget not the Lord your God because it is He who gives you the power to get these things.

So we must never ever, ever lose sight of that fact. And that is, that I believe is one of the great sins of our life, is our ingratitude to God.

[12:05] our failure to recognize His goodness and His mercy towards us in life. That where we are and what we are, now I'm not in any way changing or altering that because within our life there are often pains and there are sorrows, there are difficult things as well, but even in the midst of that His grace is given to us.

But the thing is everything ultimately comes from Him. And so Christ, the second person of the Godhead, we see here as a power behind all the creation of all things.

And that's what makes, that's what really makes the incarnation His coming into this world such a marvelous thing. The one we're told in the Bible, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him and yet we find Him being shut up as it were in the confines of the womb.

It's no wonder it's a mystery. And yet this is all a demonstration of God's love to us. Now then John goes on to put a lot of emphasis upon Jesus as the light.

And of course again there's a great play between Genesis and John here with the darkness and with the light. And as we know ultimately there are only the two conditions really in this world.

[13:42] Darkness and light. And everybody belongs either to one kingdom or the other. Either the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light.

Any person in the kingdom of light, the wonderful thing is that they cannot ever fall into the kingdom of darkness. But those in this world who are as yet under the sway of the kingdom of darkness and that the light of Jesus is not yet in their life can still be translated out of darkness into light.

Once you are in the light you will always be in the light. That doesn't mean that the light will always shine brightly in you and through you and that you are always going to see so clearly but it means that you will never again end up in the total darkness.

And not only are light and darkness two conditions, two states as it were in this world, two kingdoms in this world, there are also two destinies. Darkness and light.

They are the destinies where we go from. If we are in the kingdom of light, if we have that light, the light of Jesus within our life, then that is our destiny.

[15:07] If we remain in darkness, then, and that is how we die in darkness, then that will be our destiny, eternal darkness or eternal light.

And that is why the gospel is so important to tell people, here is Jesus, and he came into this world, he himself is light, and he is the one who comes to bring light, to bring light into your life.

And if today, my dear friend, you're in darkness, then ask the Lord to come into your life. And one of the ways of discovering whether you're in darkness or not, is if you cannot see, or in any way understand, what, who Jesus is, and what Jesus is about.

If the way of salvation is just meaningless to you, and you cannot in any way grasp it, I would indicate, that I believe indicates to you that you're still in darkness.

And that means you need to ask the Lord to bring that light into you. Because you know, one of the things that people so often say when a person comes to faith, and I remember it myself so clearly, so often I would want to be a Christian.

[16:41] to me, it seemed the most difficult thing in the world. How do I get from here to there? How do I, it seems so complicated, and yet people say, all you have to do is believe, that's what the Bible says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

You say, well how do you believe? But you know, the amazing thing is, that once you come to faith, it all seems so simple.

And one of the things we've got to realize is that salvation at the end of the day is a gift. It's not, this is one of the things that the word actually is saying, that it's not by flesh and blood that will actually come, but to all who did receive and 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.

You see, salvation is not something that we can work up in ourselves. It's not strength of will. It's not positive thinking. It's not something that I can achieve.

It's a gift. That's one of the hardest things for us to understand. It's something that we receive. We'll see that in a moment. Time is going, but we'll see that salvation is a gift.

[18 : 09] And we need to go to the giver and say, Lord, there are lots of things here I can't understand. But the one thing I know is I need salvation. I need you.

please come into my life. And you know, if we really go to the Lord and sincerely with all our heart pray that and mean that, the Lord will answer.

Those who seek will find. That's what the word says. These are not my words. They're the words of the Lord. And so Jesus is the one who has come to dispel the darkness and to bring light.

And then we see there's a very brief reference here to John the Baptist. It was a man, verse 6, it was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

And John's message was very simple. He came to bear witness about the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's something lovely about John's life because there was a threefold aspect to it.

[19 : 21] John, he lived for Christ, he spoke about Christ, and he longed that all people would come to know Christ. That's what it tells us. That's what John's life was about.

He witnessed, his life was a witness to Jesus. He himself spoke to people about Jesus. And the great longing in his heart was that people would come to know Jesus.

Can you say that about yourself? That's a great way. And in fact, that is really how a Christian should be. At the end of the day, that's how we should all be.

And so, there's just this brief reference here to John. But then it goes on that the true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own, that's to his own, which is in Utah, to his own land, his own territory, his own city, his own temple, came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

[20 : 32] You know, that's one of the most amazing things. Jesus came, he came to his own, to his own land, he came to the Jews, and if there were any people in this world who should have understood who Jesus was, it was them.

They had the prophecies, they had the word of God, and they were actually waiting for his coming. But Jesus didn't look like what they expected, he didn't live like they expected, and there was nothing really about him that they thought matched up to what their ideas were.

And you know, we can be like that too. You know, we often work out how things are going to be. We work out in our own lives how God is going to work in our life.

We actually work out in our prayer life how God is going to answer our prayers. And you know, the thing is, sometimes God has answered our prayers and we don't realize it. Because we worked out already how God is going to answer our prayer.

But he answers it in a completely different way. And because he hasn't answered it in the way that we thought or expected, we think he hasn't answered at all.

[21 : 50] I know that, that sort of thing. Sometimes it's a long time afterwards. And you realize, the Lord has actually answered my prayer. And I didn't realize.

So we need to have this spirit of waiting upon the Lord and try not to have our own preconceived ideas.

I know it's very difficult, but we should always seek to have our mind, our thinking molded by the word. So, Jesus came to his own and his own did not receive him.

There's nothing new under the sun. It's still the same today. This same Jesus is being proclaimed and there are so many who will turn their back. They don't see him.

They don't know. They don't understand. But then we see not everybody rejected, but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

[22 : 52] And as we said, it's our receiving. It's our receiving faith. That's what it tells us here. We said already, salvation is our gift.

we receive Jesus into our heart, where he becomes the object of our affections. We receive him into our will, where he becomes the king.

You know, that's a, we've said it before, this is a big obstacle, the will. It's the last thing we want to part with. We want to be king, and we want to be queen of our own lives.

We want to be in control. Nobody likes to be out of control. We like to be in charge of our own life. We like to map out life in the way that we want.

But you know, if we are serious about truly being disciples of Jesus, then we really have to say to the Lord, not my will, but your will be done in my life.

[24 : 03] In other words, take me Lord, where you want. Do with me Lord, what you wish. We might be afraid to pray that, because we're not sure where it'll take us.

We're not sure what the Lord will do with us, because we want to have control in our own lives. But the Christian is somebody who have submitted, but it's an ongoing problem.

There is a once and for all yielding up of our will to his, but there is still this ongoing battle within ourselves, and we'll always be. Time is moving, and I'm just going to run through this very, very quickly here.

We see some of the great privileges. We have become children of God. That is, we have immediate access to our Father in heaven, a Father who is always there for us.

You know, before a person becomes a Christian, they're on the run from God. You feel uncomfortable before God, just like Adam did. When Adam sinned, he had to run.

[25 : 16] But you know, when you become a Christian, you stop running. Instead of running away, you run too, because you're at peace. it's wonderful.

The peace that envelops a person's heart when they come to faith. And so there are so many blessings attached to it. We have the right to be called sons of God.

And so on. And so we see then, just moving very, very quickly here, that this, God's work in us is all of himself.

And the word 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.

See, John was an eyewitness to this. Must have been an amazing thing. John was an eyewitness to this. Now, this word, dwell, where it says that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[26 : 24] It's a wonderful word. It's got the idea of pitching your tent among us. And again, those who are experts in the language will highlight that these very, this word where the pitching of the tent, that the word for dwell and tent are cognate to the Hebrew shikina, you know, the shikina glory, that spoke about God's presence, dwelling amongst the people in, first of all, in the tabernacle and then in the temple.

It's an amazing thought that this displaced people who wandered through the wilderness, they displayed the glory of God more than any of the other peoples in this world.

If people said, where can I see the glory of God in this world? You'd say, well, I cannot actually take you into the very place where that glory is because you will die.

But the place where his glory is most known in this world is in a wee room in this tent in the wilderness, in the holy of holies.

It was that untouchable place. And God had come to reside there and to dwell there amongst his people. And you know, where is God's glory seen today?

[27 : 51] It's seen amongst his people. You know, there are many people today who pity the Christian. There are many people who genuinely pity Christians. I know people who have felt genuinely sorry when somebody's been converted.

And the reason that they're sorry is they think that that person's life, that they've thrown away their life. And they say, oh, they look on it almost as a waste.

That shows us the distortion of sin. Because when a person becomes a Christian, the glory of God comes to dwell, to dwell, to live forever within you.

If you today are a believer, the glory of God is in you. The kingdom of God is in you. Where the third person of the Godhead has come to take up residence.

It's an extraordinary thing. And so this is what we find here. And there's this beautiful coming together of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[29 : 03] Full of, we see full of grace and truth. If God was only to deal with us from the very beginning in truth or by truth, and of course he cannot deal in any way but by truth, my friends, it would be a very different story, but it's grace and truth.

And that's the beauty of it. And God has revealed himself. We don't, people are always saying, what is God like? Well, God has revealed himself in his son, the second person of the Godhead coming in human nature.

This is what we read about. Verse 18, no one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He has made him known.

It's as if God reached into the very depth of his being and pulled out his heart and gave his heart to us. that is what it's like he has done in giving us his son, Jesus Christ.

Today, I have to ask you this question. Do you know this Jesus? Do you appreciate all that God has done? Because so often we need to get our minds back to understanding, to just getting a little glimpse of God's goodness and God's greatness towards us.

[30 : 42] His love is great. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that we might indeed have a growing sense of appreciation, a growing sense of thanksgiving for all your goodness and mercy to us.

We pray, Lord, to guide us and take us to our home safely. We pray to bless a cup of tea in the hall afterwards and we pray to bless every home and every family.

Watch over us and do us good. Cleanse us from our sin, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Our concluding singing is people prayer prayer