

John 1:1-18

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[0:00] So, Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

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 was not anything made that was made.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There 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.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

[1:15] He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.

But 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.

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.

John bore witness about Him and cried out, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.

For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[2:34] No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.

John, I wonder if you'd come up and open the word for us. Oh, good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

That was pathetic. Let me try again. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. That's much better.

It's always a curiosity for me from Ireland to turn up in a country that celebrates St. Patrick much more than we do. I think I've come to the conclusion that there are two sorts of Americans.

Those who are Irish and those who wish they were. But it is a great pleasure to be invited to come to this church this morning.

[3:53] And you made me feel very welcome by inadvertently choosing a hymn that's associated with my family. Keith Getty is married to my niece, Kristen.

That hymn, Speak Lord, and In Christ Alone, and Creation Song are some of the delightful products. I don't claim any responsibility for it, except that they're married because I introduced them to each other.

So I do claim some responsibility for it. Now, we are to look at a very important part of Scripture.

As I travel around the world, and particularly talking to students, and I'm delighted to see so many of you here, I find in evangelical Christianity there are two major barriers to evangelism.

They are fear and shame. We are tragically suffering a loss of confidence in the authority of Scripture.

[5:07] And there are reasons for it. Some of us have been privileged to have a very advanced education in some of the best universities in the world.

But problematically, we have not given the same attention to the study of God's Word as we have done to our physics, mathematics, literature, history, economics, and art.

And my plea is for a generation of young people who will make up their minds to love the Lord with their minds and to commit themselves to get into the Word of God so that they will model a sense of its authority and power in this generation.

That's going to be expensive in terms of time and in terms of commitment. I notice that people become very professional.

And their academic education moves at this speed while their Christian education remains at the level of Sunday school so that when they articulate, their colleagues notice the gap and silence them often permanently.

[6:32] We've got to bridge that gap. And you cannot do it without doing it. That it is very easy to profess that we believe that the Bible is the Word of God but our belief is purely technical because we don't know what's in it.

And we haven't learned to articulate it in a way that is credible in a generation that knows nothing of it. A lot of work to be done, isn't there? And I want to encourage you this morning just by saying some things about this magnificent Gospel of John which from a literary perspective alone is a work of unparalleled genius.

John tells us in chapter 20 what his book is about. And he says explicitly that in verse at the end of the chapter Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples.

20 verse 30 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 believing you may have life in his name. This is one of the occasions when an author tells you exactly why he wrote the book.

[8:07] And we need to take it seriously. Jesus did many signs. The word semion from which we get semiotics. That is he did things that pointed to a deeper level.

So it's a book of signs. It's a book of signs. It's a book of indicators. It's a book of evidences. To take us to what? Well to convince us to believe that Jesus is the Messiah expected by the Jews, number one.

To convince us that he's the Son of God. But not simply to convince us intellectually, propositionally, but also that through trusting him we may experience life in his name.

These things are written that you might believe, which immediately shows that John is concerned with evidence-based belief.

I emphasize that because there is a widespread feeling created mainly by Richard Dawkins and his friends. That belief is a religious word.

[9:25] That faith is a religious word. And it means believing where there is no evidence. That is dangerously false in several simultaneous directions.

Faith in the New Testament is a commitment of our mind and heart and will based on evidence.

Otherwise you'd need to scrap your New Testament because it claims to be evidence. And here is John telling you that his gospel is going to fill these concepts with meaning.

These things are written that you might believe. What does it mean to believe? Well we would expect his book to tell us. And so we need to study it because it is devoted to unpacking the notion of what it actually means to believe.

And therefore to give us confidence. Unfortunately some Christians have run along with the atheist concept of faith.

[10:30] That it's something that just happens to you. That there's no evidence about it. And so of course they're ashamed and fearful when they're questioned by their peers.

Whatever other religions may think. Faith in the New Testament sense is firmly evidence based. You would be a fool to believe if there were no evidence.

Certainly I wouldn't stand here for a nanosecond if I didn't think there was evidence. And John gives it to us in terms of these signs. His book is very sophisticated.

But delightfully sophisticated. You know I'm a mathematician. And I love and have always loved structure. But in the ancient world.

The literary people whom I also love. I'm always torn between the arts and the sciences. So you humanities people can feel perfectly safe with me. Although I'm not quite tame.

[11:35] Like Aslan. I used to listen to C.S. Lewis when I was at Cambridge you see. And he's infected me. Infected me with a serious love for literature.

And regarding scripture as literature. You see one of our problems ladies and gentlemen. Is that we treat the Bible as less than a book. That may seem strange statement to you.

But we apply canons of thinking to it. That we never dream of applying. To any other book we ever read. And so when we see this book.

It's a book of signs. And we can list the signs. The very first sign. Is the wedding at Cana of Galilee. And that might give us a little hint. That John uses the signs.

To navigate through his book. There's not just one. And you will notice that. When the first sign. The turning of water into wine at Cana.

[12:36] Is described. John says this. In chapter 2 verse 13.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand. And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And in the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep. It's clear you move.

And I would want to argue. If I had 10 hours to talk to you. But I don't. That there is a sequence in John's gospel. The first section of the book is not the introduction.

The first 18 verses. But leads up to the first sign. And at the end of the first sign. You see accomplished what the book is about.

Let me read it to you. Verse 11 of 2 says. This is the first of his signs. Jesus did in Cana in Galilee. And manifested his glory.

[13:36] And his disciples believed in him. In other words. This is achieving the stated aim of the book. How do you get people believing.

In these spectacular claims. That Jesus made. So Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. For the Passover.

And he does many things. He talks to Nicodemus. And then he moves away. And he comes back to Galilee. And lo and behold. He arrives back in Cana of Galilee. Where he did his first sign.

And there he does his second. Or at least nearby. And when that sign is done. In chapter 4. You read in chapter 5 verse 1.

After this there was a feast of the Jews. And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And if you know anything about ancient literature. The bells begin to ring. The lights begin to flash. And you say. Aha.

[14:34] Here is a structure. It's not simply about signs. It's about festivals. A feast of the Jews.

Firstly the Passover. Secondly unnamed. And there are five of them through the book. And the structure I can explain to you in 20 seconds. Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for a festival.

He does things there. And he comes back to Galilee. And the final longest section is when Jesus comes to Jerusalem. Is crucified. Rises from the dead. And ends up in Galilee.

So that's a very simple structure. And it raises fascinating questions. What are these signs? And when you begin to think of these festivals.

It's as if the creator is walking onto the stage. And seeing what people are doing. And seeing what people are doing. With the festivals he himself gave them.

[15:40] Fascinating. But I'm not going to talk about all of that. Because I want to come to this first section. In the beginning. In the beginning.

Was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. You start at creation. And you end up with a wedding.

How fascinating. Because you will discover. That this first part of John's gospel. Splits into two.

There is the so-called prologue. Starting with creation. And ending with the revelation of the glory of God. In the incarnate word. And then.

There follows. A very interesting sequence. Verse 19 of chapter 1. Which begins the next part.

[16:38] This is the testimony of John. And certain things happen. And then in verse 29. It says the next day. John saw Jesus coming.

And in verse 35. It says the next day. Next day. And in verse 43. It says the next day. And in chapter 2. Verse 1. It says on the third day.

There was a wedding at Cana. And you say. What's important about that? But ladies and gentlemen. This is scripture. We need to take it seriously. There is a sequence of days.

How many are there? Well that's an interesting scholarly question. And you might like to count. If you're anything of a mathematician. To see how many you make. It up to.

But I think I need to tell you. Just a little detail. The third day. Is not the third in the sequence. Obviously. Because there have already been four. It's the third day.

[17:35] After the final one. So there are seven. Now I'm sure you've come across. The seven days of Genesis 1. Have you ever heard a talk of the seven days of John 1?

Here is the definitive chapter in the New Testament about creation. And in its background. And in its background. Woven in so that you scarcely notice it.

Is a time sequence. In fact there are two time sequences. In the first day. In the first day. So let's have a look at it briefly. Shall we? We start with a beginning.

The beginning. And we end with another kind of beginning. A wedding. A marriage. A beginning. That ought to make you think.

A marriage is not quite a creation of the universe. Is it? Or is it? Well let's think about it. And let's look briefly at these familiar things.

[18:45] Things. Against the background. Of the fact that this chapter. Burns into. And challenges. The prevailing naturalism.

That dominates the academy today. In the beginning. There was a beginning. Well most of the physicists agree with that. I'm glad to say. They have problems in getting to the beginning though.

Because denying God. And God. And believing there was a beginning. Leads to great difficulty. Intellectually you know. Because it means.

You've got to get a universe. From nothing. Now see how John. Has. Thought about this. Very carefully. In the beginning was the word.

The word was with God. And the word was God. You can say that. In just a few split seconds. But can you unpack it? The word was with God.

[19 : 44] The word was God. What is God? Notice the first thing. That's said about the word. Is that he is eternally existent.

The second. That he was with God. And then he was God. But how can you be God with God? God. We need to take this seriously.

Don't we? What is it saying? Well the only way I know how to put it. Is that God is a fellowship. God is not a monolith.

God. God. God. God. God. And that. Knocks out silly ideas of God. That God was lonely. And created a few human beings. To have folks to talk to.

God. Is an uncaused. Complex person. Who is capable of relationship within himself.

[20 : 41] Now we've got a faint picture of that in marriage of all things. Two people. A man and a woman.

Who become one flesh. It's only a faint picture isn't it? But a marriage is a complex person isn't it?

Wonderful person. I've been married to the same lady for 44 years. I saw her on my first day at Cambridge. But that's another story. Now.

All things were made by him. Well that's what most of the translations say. But actually. It's more interesting than that. It means that.

But it's more interesting than that. It's all things came to be through him. And without him. Nothing came to be that came to be. You see. John is interested in something.

[21 : 41] That many people today are very interested in. What does this universe consist of? And the Greeks then were fascinated by this. There are things that came to exist.

They could see that. I came to exist. You came to exist. Some of them didn't believe the universe came to exist. But the Bible does. And God.

The word. What about him? Did he come to exist? No. You see. John is making a statement here. That bites right into the contemporary debate. The word was.

That is eternally existent. The universe came to be. And things that came to be.

Have causes. And that raises the question. Doesn't it? How does this universe come to be? And you see. If. If. All things came to be.

[22 : 46] By definition. There was nothing before. Nothing in the philosophical sense. And I emphasize that. Because I had a little counterton with Lawrence Krauss not long ago.

In the London Times. Which you can read. Physicists and cosmologists are desperate to get a universe from nothing. But nothing means to most people philosophical nothing.

If I say I went down the street and I met nobody. It doesn't mean I met somebody who was nobody. It means I didn't meet anybody. If you can work the logic of that out at this time of the morning.

But they twist the meaning of nothing. And they call it a quantum vacuum. And then they write books. A universe from nothing. That gives the impression they've solved.

One of the deepest philosophical problems of all. How do you get something from nothing? But they change the definition of nothing. Now I put it to you students. What would you think if one of your class submitted the following statement in an essay?

[23:55] Since something is physical, nothing must be physical. That's what Lawrence Krauss writes at the beginning of his book. A universe from nothing.

It's nonsense of course. And it simply proves that nonsense remains nonsense even if high-powered scientists say it. It amazes me the lengths to which bright people will go.

The lengths of absurdity. Because they're facing a massive problem. The solution of which is standing staring us in the face here. If you deny God, you've got to get the universe from physical nothing.

From philosophical nothing, sorry. And you can't do it. I've written a little book on Stephen Hawking's attempt to do it. And I've also written on Krauss's attempt.

You cannot do it. And what they cleverly do is redefine nothing as a quantum vacuum. And that's not nothing. But I'm delighted that I had a debate not long ago with Alan Guth at MIT Harvard Faculty Club.

[25:01] Up the road there. You've probably heard of it. And since I was debating Alan Guth, who's the father of the inflation theory of cosmology, I said, Alan, we need to clear something up for the public here.

You physicists and cosmologists are talking all the time about nothing. But you don't mean nothing in the sense we do. And he agreed with me. I'm glad of that agreement that I've used it many times since.

Ladies and gentlemen, Scripture is profound. It hits the very essence of the issue. Why is there something rather than nothing?

Because there is an eternal God. Who caused its existence. That's big stuff, isn't it? It's good to get our minds into Scripture in this way.

To see it says more than other philosophies, not less. It will bend your mind. And if Scripture hasn't begun you students to bend your mind, then you haven't begun to read it.

[26:09] You're still in the Sunday school. Trivializing it as nice little stories for kids. And it is nice little stories for kids. That's because it's true. But you need to get your mind.

And you know, it's very interesting. Because John is telling us that science didn't put the universe there. I hope you've noticed that. Nor did the scientists.

Peter Atkins, I once asked him, Professor of Physical Chemistry at Oxford, who probably is the author of most of the textbooks on physical chemistry at Yale that are used. I asked him, What created the universe, Peter?

He said, Mathematics. And I started to laugh. He said, What are you laughing at? I said, That's about the most absurd thing I as a mathematician have ever heard. I said, Peter, Two plus two equals four.

Did that ever put four dollars in your pocket? This absurd notion that mathematics and abstract can create things.

[27:08] Or perhaps I should pause and think that there's some accountants and bankers that think that mathematics creates money. We saw that it doesn't, didn't we?

What an absurd notion. Mathematics describes something existent. It doesn't create anything. God is the creator. The transcendent creator of space-time.

Last night I mentioned, I mentioned again, of course this immediately deals with the question that Richard Dawkins thinks solves all theological problems and renders the existence of God absurd.

Who created the creator? If you believe that God created the universe, now surely, if you're logical, you will say, Well, who created the creator that created the creator? And so it goes on forever.

You can't go on forever. Nonsense. End of theology. End of God. Let's go back to watching American football. But ladies and gentlemen, that is childishly naive.

[28:14] Who created X? What do those words mean? The question, what does it mean? The question contains an assumption that X is created.

Who created X? But what if X was not created? You can't apply the question then. And this is what John is saying.

God is uncreated. Uncaused. So the question doesn't apply to him. It only applies to created creators. And created creators are what we normally call idols and figments of the imagination.

It's interesting, isn't it? A simple thing that trips up so many people. And Dawkins had put it at the heart of the God delusion.

I just couldn't believe it when I saw it. Ah, but it's got a lovely sting in it. And when Dawkins put it to me, as did Peter Singer, I said, Richard, let me apply the question to you because it does work with created gods.

[29:16] You believe the universe created you. So let me ask you your own question. Who created your creator? I'm still waiting for the answer.

Surprise, surprise. So, in this wonderful passage, we see that we are starting with creation, but we're beginning to move.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. Now, we haven't come to the incarnation yet, ladies and gentlemen. This is absolutely precise logic.

We're talking about creation. And we're now moving from entities that are created, a created universe, to life. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

What do you think that means? In what sense is life a light? Well, I think in a very simple and obvious sense.

[30:24] If you see a light, if you're standing down on the coast here, there are lots of lighthouses. I noticed some of them from the air. And every time you see a light out there at night, you say, I wonder where it's coming from.

Don't you? And we look at life, ladies and gentlemen. We find ourselves in a universe that's not inanimate.

It's animate. There is life at all kinds of levels. And anybody that thinks, asks, what is the ultimate origin of life? Is that a big question these days?

Listen to the staggering immensity of this clay. In him was life.

Life involves physical processes. Of course it does. We are made of physics and chemistry. You've probably discovered that already because at my age, some of the bits begin to fall off and don't work as well as they once did, particularly the bit inside here.

[31:40] But is that all there is to life? Is it to be explained reductionistically in terms of physics and chemistry?

Is it? In him was life. Let me make a little suggestion to you, rather provocatively.

If you try to explain life without involving him, you'll end up in the dark. Now I know that statement demands justification.

That's why I wrote one of my books, *God's Undertaker Has Science Buried God*, to try to unpack that. But just this morning, that context, that life at all of its levels, its ultimate explanation is God.

And you notice how God is described. Some people have the idea that God will. Christopher Hitchens sadly did. Some old tyrant in the sky. Always looking to see if anybody was having fun and stopping it.

[32 : 52] Sad, sad, sad Christopher. God invented life. He invented the atom.

He invented the elementary particle. But ladies and gentlemen, he invented life in all its stunning complexity. He invented your life.

And your life is unique because we read in our first reading. And God said, let us make man in our own image.

The creation shows God's glory. It wasn't made in his image, was it? You were. Utterly unique. You're made in God's image.

And that statement, incidentally, is the foundation for all our concepts of the value of life in Western society and its being eroded as fast as it can at the moment.

[33 : 50] And even atheists are alarmed. Like Germany's leading intellectual, Jürgen Habermas, who said, as an atheist, he said, you need to be very careful in attempting to destroy religion because you're going to remove from people an invaluable source of meaning.

In fact, he said that when it comes to human rights and all those things that we enjoy, they all come from the Judeo-Christian heritage. And he goes on to say anything else is post-modern chatter.

That's strong stuff for an atheist. Realizing that life, which is so precarious at the moment, we are the first generation to live to see a serious attempt to redefine the basic parameters that govern human life and existence.

That's why Scripture is important, ladies and gentlemen. In it was life, the life was the light of men. And then we discover that there is darkness.

darkness. The light shines in the darkness. And we all know what that darkness is.

[35 : 15] And then we're coming down through history. We now come to the age of the prophets culminating in John who came as witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

Do you see, witness within history is associated with the basis for belief. It is evidential. Of course it is.

God wants us to be certain. So not only is God the source of all life, but he sent a man, a whole sequence of men culminating in John to bear witness of it so that we would have additional reason to believe.

Well, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. There's a big statement, isn't there? Scripture says it.

I believe it. Gives light to everyone. Paul will unpack that later. Creation is a light.

[36 : 17] Our moral sense is a light. There is evidence at different levels for everybody. Scripture is a light. that he was coming into the world.

And now he's in the world. You see, we're coming down through history. The world was made through him, yet the world didn't know him. There's something of a pathos, isn't there, about that?

The notion that the one who created the stars of the planets standing in a tiny little country in the Middle East. It is utterly staggering.

And of course, it's sheer nonsense if it isn't true. The world made by him. Can't get your mind around that.

Can you? He came to his own and his own people didn't receive him. But to all he received to be believed in his name, he gave the right to become what they never were by birth.

[37 : 24] Children of God. Oh, this is magnificent. We are all by nature creatures of God. We're not children of God.

But see what's going on here. The word was with God. There is a fellowship. And here's the central message of this book. That that fellowship is prepared to extend itself to you.

To as many as received him. It's not automatic. It doesn't happen by birth as he says. Because fellowship and love cannot be produced by coercion.

And there's a big back story to that as well. To as many as received him. It is staggering that the one who made the universe waits.

Comes into our world and stands in front of us and comes in such a way that people aren't frightened to invite him into their homes. And he waits until we receive him.

[38 : 47] It is stupendous in its humility, isn't it? It's one of the things that rings so true with me and impresses me that Christianity is true.

What a God if he's like that. He's so interested in having my friendship and fellowship that the terms of it are that I should receive him which of course implies I have the capacity to do so otherwise it would be absurd.

As many as received him. Now of course many things are involved in that. If we receive him we have to turn our backs in the darkness and repent and receive him as saviour but to as many as received him.

We're now part of the family the bigger family the very family of God. There's nothing like it. I said last night at Yale that you know Jesus doesn't compete with anybody here because nobody offers us anything like this.

Nobody else. There's no competition. It is utterly unique. But we must move rapidly because I have a clock here that's desperate. The word became flesh.

[40 : 12] I remember I was talking to five or six hundred physicists at one of our major atomic weapons establishments the first time anybody would get in to talk to them and I gave them a talk and afterwards a professor at Oxford came up to me and very friendly and he said well now Professor Lennox that was a very interesting talk but you know I detect that you're a Christian.

He was pretty sharp. I detect that you're a Christian and he said you know aren't you obliged to believe that Jesus is human as well as God?

I said absolutely. He said do you believe that? You're a mathematician Professor Oxford. I said yeah I believe that. He said can you explain it to me? Well I said let's have a quid pro quo let me ask you a couple of simpler questions first.

He said that's fine. I said tell me what is consciousness? And after a moment of thought he said I don't know. I said okay let's take something easier.

What is energy? When he said we can measure it and use it I said that wasn't my question what is it? Slightly longer hesitation I don't know. He said I'm glad you agree with Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman.

[41 : 27] I said that's very interesting. You don't know what they are. Tell me I said do you believe in consciousness? Yes he said I do. Oh I said interesting.

And do you believe in energy? Yes he said I do and yet you don't know what they are. I said should I write you off as a physicist? He said please don't I said you are about to write me off.

Because I couldn't explain to you the nature of the incarnation which compared with the nature of consciousness and energy is infinitely deeper in.

There are some questions ladies and gentlemen it's better to be honest about we can't answer them. But then I pushed it a little bit you see. I said you don't know what consciousness is and you don't know what energy are you believe in them.

Why? Well he got really stuck there so being a kind Irishman I helped him out. And I said to him I suspect you believe in them because they are concepts with explanatory power.

[42 : 35] He said oh yes that's why I believe in them. And I said that's exactly why I believe that Jesus is God and human. It's the only explanation that makes sense of the data.

the word became human and dwelt above us. Now as I said the time is very rapidly going on so I just want to point out that when we start these days we first of all discover that John gives his testimony that he's not the Messiah but he is the voice.

So here's another major concept. The word the voice what is the message of the voice ladies and gentlemen?

Well you'd have to read a good whack of Isaiah to understand that and that'll do you no harm at all. The voice that came crying in the wilderness makes straight the way of the Lord all flesh shall see the glory of God I'm citing Isaiah now.

The voice says that all flesh is grass temporary and fleeting but the word of the Lord endures forever.

[44 : 12] So the voice talks about the word and we need to listen to the message of the voice if ever we're going to have confidence in the word.

There was John uniquely positioned to point the way to Jesus standing in a desert you'd be blind to use a little bit of literary imagination to see that that's depicting exactly the scene of what has happened to our world with the darkness it's turned it into a desert.

That's where Isaiah started. Why? Because the nation in his day had rebelled against God and gone and got involved with all sorts of pagan gods.

And in the next day John says behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And so we come down to another massive concept.

This is the voice ladies and gentlemen. This isn't just anybody. And the voice tells you to look at the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

[45 : 32] Now those concepts of course are all Old Testament concepts. And I haven't time to unpack them but they are immensely powerful. Not simply the word of God but the lamb of God.

And John pointed out that he outranks me for the very simple reason he was before me eternally existent.

The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then he says I saw the spirit descend and remained on him. I myself did not know him but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me he in whom you see the spirit descend and remain he it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Oh how fascinating. When was the notion that Jesus was the lamb of God? When did it reach its highest fulfillment?

On the cross yes. So we have the creation with the age of the prophets with the incarnation with the cross and now what are we next? He it is that is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

[46 : 45] That's the day of Pentecost. You notice the order is right historically don't you? precisely in order. If you take these things in terms now of their ultimate fulfillment.

And then the next day what happens the next day? John was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as they walked. Behold the Lamb of God.

And the two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Oh that's a big word. Don't read it too quickly.

The transition from being a disciple of John from having heard his moral preparation now to get involved with the Lamb of God and follow him.

But I thought you followed a shepherd not a lamb. Ah but this is the Lamb who is the shepherd. As the book of Revelation will finally tell you.

[47 : 51] Yes. So Jesus turned and saw them and he said to them and this is stunning. What are you looking for?

What do you want? Ladies and gentlemen this is the one who invented the biochemical pathways, the synapses in the brain, the internal forces and energies of galaxies, gravitation, dark energy.

He comes into our world and he stands in front of two people and he said what do you want? he's standing in front of you at the moment.

What do you want? Can you imagine it? What are you looking for? That's the first question in this gospel.

God asks you what you're looking for. You need to take a long time in quiet answering that question. Because it's God asking it. What are you really looking for?

[49 : 19] But the fact that he asks it is so magnificently encouraging. It means he's interested in what you're looking for. The longings of your heart for some kind of ultimate satisfaction, meaning, significance, making the connections, having a life that's valid and that flourishes.

What are you looking for? He wants you to articulate it. I feel a bit sorry for these two disciples. Of course, they didn't really know who he was, did they?

They were beginning to get an idea. And so, in the end, they said, well, where are you living? Where do you dwell?

Ah, they didn't realize what they were asking. Let's come and see, he said. Let me show you where I'm living. So, off they went. And one of the two who heard John speak was Andrew, and he found his brother Simon.

And Andrew brought him to Jesus, and Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Kephas, which means Peter, which in English means a stone.

[50 : 35] What's that all about? What Peter himself tells us later, doesn't he? To whom coming? To Jesus as a living stone. stone. You are built up to be a spiritual house.

Isn't that fascinating? If you come to Jesus and say, where do you live? You'll find he wants to live inside you. This is very big things, isn't it?

Changed Simon's name, indicating the radicality of his new nature. And they're the foundations of the church, still in the right order, isn't it?

What? Creation, prophets, cross, Pentecost, church, all right order, isn't it? And then there's a wonderful story about Nathaniel.

Ooh. you are a genuine Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. And guile is a translation of the name of Jacob.

[51 : 49] Ooh, that's interesting, isn't it? And Nathaniel is immediately massively impressed and says, you are the son of God, you are the king of Israel.

And Jesus said, because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe you will see greater things than this? You will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

And of course, he's referring to Jacob's ladder, isn't he? And you notice the order, ascending and descending.

That ladder is interesting. Jacob was fleeing from his brother and from revenge first night out from home and he saw this ladder from earth up to heaven and it was an amazing situation because he called it Beth El, the house of God and he said, surely God is in this place.

Please notice where God was in that story. That's the whole point of it. He was not at the top of the ladder. He was at the bottom. Surely God is in this place.

[52 : 58] The angels ascending from the presence of God in this place and descending. Oh, that's a big story. I wonder what it is all about, ladies and gentlemen.

Jacob and Guile. Do I hear the Apostle Paul say there's a time coming when iniquity will be removed from Jacob? Oh, that's an interesting theological conundrum for some people.

and I'm not going to go into it because my time's gone. Because I'm going to finish very briefly with this.

The climax of the sequence is a wedding. Lasted seven days which was a bit problematic for supplying the wine.

And it ran out. A very embarrassing in a Middle Eastern setting. And to cut a long story short, you know what happened.

[54 : 03] Jesus turned the water of purification that was standing on the side of the feast because the religious ceremony was over. And he said, well, fill those jars up and bring them back in.

How embarrassing. Doubly embarrassing. But we finished with the religious bit. It's bad enough to run out of wines. We're still bringing religion back into a wedding, isn't it? Many people think so.

But ladies and gentlemen, this is a sign. It's raising a question. Why does the joy run out of marriages? Have a look at those jars.

What were they? Jars of purification. That's normally why the joy runs out. That husband or wife or both become impure that? That's a seriously important topic in the 21st century, isn't it?

And what Jesus did is magnificent. They thought the concept of purification was a negative religious concept, and the whole thing will spoil it even worse.

[55 : 11] Jesus turned that into a wine that they gladly drank. And he got the purification inside them. Do you know, I could nearly preach a sermon on that? Bringing joy where it had run out.

Is the joy of your marriage running out, sir? Madam, young people, is there joy in your relationships?

Are they beginning to get grubby? me? I need to face these things are real, ladies and gentlemen.

They're battles we all face. I'm not preaching at you. I'm simply raising these questions. Here's a wedding, a new beginning. And when I got married 44 years ago, I'll never forget the preacher who was an ex-heavyweight boxer, incidentally, man.

And had to re-educate himself and sit down with children and learn to read and write. And I brought him to Cambridge to show to the students what God can do in a man's life. And as he stood in front of us in a church, he said, I want to give you this for your married life.

[56:36] And he read the first few words of Genesis 1, in the beginning God. You're making a new beginning today. In the beginning God.

You'll make more new beginnings. There may be children, a new job, a move. In the beginning God. And it's lived with me to this very moment. If you don't bring God in at the beginning, he the beginner, you will be the loser.

And the final thing is very moving, isn't it? Because we are told by John that Jesus, through this sign, turning water into wine, manifested his glory.

Now, I have observed many weddings. And it is a very dangerous thing at a wedding to outshine the bride. Dare you turn up in a dress that's better than the bride's dress.

There's nothing said about the bride's glory. I'm sure she was a delightful young woman. But there's something said about Christ's glory, and it answers the question, why was he at the wedding?

[58:02] Because he was looking for a bride. There is to be, ladies and gentlemen, a marriage supper of the Lamb.

And how does he get his bride? By showing his glory. That's not the concept everybody's got of Christianity. They think it's a collection of rules and regulations.

Rules and regulations are important, but unless we've seen the glory of Jesus and been attracted by it, our lives will soon slide into negativism.

I'm looking forward to that wedding, because I'm going to be a tiny part of that bride. bride. You see, the beginning of eternity is not the end.

It's a new beginning. It's a wedding. The marriage supper of the Lamb. And that tells you how people become part of the bride, by trusting the Lamb. I close with this.

[59:14] One of my best friends died a few years ago, younger than me. we made an agreement that whoever was left would preach at the funeral.

And I remember when he told me that he had terminal cancer and said, John, I never thought that it would be this way round, but will you speak at my funeral? One of the most gifted and dedicated Bible teachers and evangelists that the student world has ever seen.

I said, Nigel, what will I tell them? What's your last message to them? Without hesitation, he said this.

He said, John, tell them to do what we did when we were students at Cambridge. To get into the word of God.

We spent three hours every Sunday afternoon and sometimes more, 50 of us, studying scripture. Tell them to get into the word as we did.

[60:18] And wait on God until the face of Christ appears. And he said, then they'll have something to say. If you haven't caught the glory, you'll have nothing to say.

And the world desperately needs young people and older people who've got something to say. My heart goes out to you.

Why do I talk to you like this? Because I wish I'd been taught these things when I was much younger. I was fortunate to get them pretty young. God bless you.

And give you such a sense of following the glorious Lamb who is the King. That with confidence, not because you know all the answers.

Be honest. Tell people you don't know them. But demonstrate through your affection for them and for their questions. That you've got something that's infinitely precious.

[61:28] Simon Peter once gave his testimony in these terms. He said, I was called by his glory and virtue. I was captivated by the sheer wonder of the person of Jesus.

And I tell you something that if you are too, it'll help you overcome your fear and your embarrassment among your colleagues.

God bless you. death of the children of the condition.

Very good.