

Eternal Source of Life and Light

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[0 : 00] And we're staying on the topic of John's Gospel this morning, so we're going to turn now to our Bible reading, and we're looking at the very first words of John's Gospel. You'll find on page 886.

Last week, if you were here, we were looking at the very end of John's Gospel, where John gives us his whole purpose in writing his account. He's writing it so that people may see the evidence, they may believe, and so have life.

And now we're going to look at the very start, and John gives us an introduction to his Gospel. You might call it an executive summary, setting out the key things he's going to be telling us through his Gospel.

So we're looking at the very start. We're going to look at the first five verses, but I'm going to read all of his executive summary. So verses 1 to 18 of John chapter 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[1 : 11] 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 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, 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 dwells among us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[2 : 35] 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. And from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

He has made him known. Amen. This is the Word of the Lord. May he bless it to us this morning.

It will be helpful to have John chapter 1 open. On page 886. Looking at these opening five verses of John's introduction to his gospel.

Now last week, we were reading and thinking about John's great purpose statement about his whole gospel there in chapter 20. And he tells us very plainly why he bothers to go to all this extraordinary effort to write this most astonishing of accounts of the life of Jesus.

[3 : 59] And he writes these things, he tells us, 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.

And he fills his gospel account with reliable, solid eyewitness testimony about Jesus. About the things he said and things he did.

He sets up the evidence so that all who read it would come to believe. And they believe certain things about Jesus. And that by believing, you would have life and life in his name.

Eternal life. Life in all its fullness. Forever with the God who created you. And to have that eternal life, you must believe in the true Christ.

You must believe in the true Christ. And not a false one. Not a false Christ. Not a misrepresentation of Christ. Not the Christ of human intuition or philosophy or tradition.

[5 : 03] But the true Christ. And John then gives us this immense treasure, his gospel. 21 chapters. Demonstrating in every single paragraph.

That Jesus is God in human flesh. That he is the true God. The true man. Fully God. And fully man. That is the Christ. Who is the true Christ. And that is the Christ that must be believed on. In order for one to be saved. Not some other Christ.

This Christ. The Christ of John's gospel. And so as we turn to the very first page. Of his gospel. It ought to be no surprise to us. That it's all about Jesus.

It's all about Jesus Christ. And these words. They are utterly astonishing. The claims they make. Are the biggest claims you could possibly make.

[6 : 04] Because they go to the very root of everything. So we are going to see in these first five verses. That Jesus is the beginning of all reality.

It's all about Jesus. So we will look at them in three points. Firstly verses 1 to 3. Verses 1 to 3. Jesus is the beginning of all reality.

Because he has always been with God. And is God. We need to be clear. Before we delve in any further. We need to be clear about.

Who or what. John is referring to here. When he speaks about the word. It's all over this first verse. In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God.

And the word was God. Some pretty big claims there about. The word. Who or what. Is John talking about. Well the term that John uses here.

[7 : 00] In the Greek. Is the word logos. Which is a translation. Of the Hebrew word. For word. And in the Old Testament. Often referred to.

Often indicated. The living. Powerful. Creating word. Of the living God. And so when John uses that word here. He's evoking all those memories.

That Jewish readers would have. Of the word. In the Old Testament. But also work to. Draw in the Greek reader. Because that word here. Logos.

In Greek terms. It was the very essence. Of all reality. And so John is saying here. Look. Here's the essence of reality. Here's the word. The Old Testament is full of.

So for example. In Psalm 33. We read. That by this word. Of the Lord. Were the heavens made. So this is the powerful.

[7 : 57] Creating word. It's also the word. That brings salvation. For God's people. So in Psalm 107. We read that. He sent forth his word. And healed them.

He rescued them. From the grave. So as one preacher put it. This Old Testament. This Old Testament. Personification of the word of God.

As the agent. Of all creation. Of revelation. And salvation. Makes it. Just the right title. For John to use. To introduce.

The fullest. And ultimate. Self-revelation. Of God. In his one. And only son. In fact. We just need to read. A few verses on.

In John's account. To see. What he's talking about. Look at verse 14. Chapter one. And the word. There's that word again. The word became. Flesh. And dwells among us.

[8 : 54] And we have seen. His glory. Glory as of the only son. From the father. Full of grace. And truth. It's just as the writer.

In the letter of the Hebrews. Put it. As we opened our service with. In the past. God spoke. To our forefathers. Through the prophets. But in these last days. He's spoken to us.

By a son. You see. The word. Is a person. He's God's. Own son. Jesus Christ. And the claims.

John makes here. In these first two verses. Are just extraordinary. John is saying. That Jesus. The word. He is the beginning. Of all reality.

In the beginning. Was the word. And immediately. As we read those words. We're transported. Back to the very beginning. Of creation. To the very first words.

[9 : 51] Of the Bible. You see. The story of Christ. Doesn't begin. In Bethlehem. Or even. As Mark tells us. With the prophetic writings. No. It begins. Beyond the frontiers.

Of time. It begins. In the secret counsel. Of God. In all eternity. You see. These first three words. Of John's gospel. They are the first. Three words.

Of what we call. Genesis. The first. Book of the Bible. The first. How does Genesis. Open. In the beginning. Now. For any Jewish reader.

That would have struck. Particular bells. Not only. Are they the first words. Of the Bible. They were the title. For the first book. Of the Bible. Jewish readers. Use the first three words.

Of each book. For its title. So for example. We. What we call. The book of numbers. Jewish readers. Would take. The first three words. So the title. In the Jewish Bible. Is in the wilderness.

[10:46] And so. They were known. Genesis. As. In the beginning. So that just draws. The attention. Of the Jewish reader. To those first. Words.

In particular. He's the beginning. And in the beginning. When all things. Were created. Were told. They were created. By. The word of God. The word.

Jesus. He was there. At the very beginning. In fact. He was already there. He was there. Before the creation. Of the world. His existence. Stretches beyond. Our created universe.

He's eternal. But it's not just. That Jesus. Was there. That word. Beginning. In the beginning. It also means.

The root. Or the origin. So John is saying here. That not only. Was the word. Already there. At the beginning. At the beginning. Of all things. But he was the cause.

[11:45] Of all things. He's the source. He's the origin. It all comes from him. So Jesus. The word. He's the source. Of all creation.

Of revelation. Of salvation. He's the source. Of all things. Because. Not only was he there. In the beginning. But also. What we're told about him. Look at the second half.

Of the first verse. In the beginning. Was the word. And the word. Was with God. And the word. Was God. So he was with God.

And that word. With God. The preposition there. With. It stresses. Real close. Proximity. It's not just that he was there. But there's a real closeness.

There was an intimacy. It's not merely that the word. Was associated with God. Somehow. But actually. An intimate fellowship. With him. It's this intimacy.

[12:44] Of the union. And communion. Between the father. And the son. That John stresses. That is. He is in some way. A distinct person.

But he is also. Himself. God. He was with God. But also. He was God. So he. The word. Jesus. Jesus. He was not. Some sort of. Inferior. Christ. As the Jehovah. Witnesses. Would have you believe. Nor. Is he less than divine. As Unitarians.

Would have you believe. No. John is teaching us here. Clearly. That the word. Is eternal. He is God. Himself. He is the source.

And the creator. Of all things. Verse 3. Is emphatic. Isn't it? Look at that. Verse 3. All things were made. Through him. And without him. Was not anything made.

[13:39] That was made. Now this is pretty. Extraordinary stuff. Isn't it? These are major claims. That John is making. The Jesus of John's gospel.

The Jesus of all the Bible. He claims rule. Over all of heaven and earth. Because he is God. He is God. In human flesh. He is the source.

Of all things. And that is. An exclusive claim. To truth. Isn't it? This isn't. One. Possible truth.

Amongst many. It can't possibly be. Either. Jesus is part. Of the Godhead. And the creator. And sustainer. Of all things. Or. He isn't.

Either. Jesus did. Really walk. This earth. Say the things. That he said. Dine across. Rise again. Ascend to heaven. And promise to come back. One day.

[14:34] To judge the living. And the dead. Either he did those things. Or he didn't. Either Christianity. Is the truth. Or it isn't. It can't possibly be.

One truth. Amongst many. Holding equal status. With. Islam. Or Sikhism. Or Hinduism. Or whatever. Religion you might want to choose. That was exactly the conversation.

My wife Steph had yesterday. Outside my daughter's ballet class. Chatting to another dad. He said exactly that. Well Christianity is just one amongst many. They're all the same. It's equal.

You need to pick one. But that possibly can't be the truth. Can it? To say all religions are the same. Or equally true. It's a total nonsense.

It doesn't take any of them seriously. Does it? If you say that. You see Jesus presents himself. Not. As one possible path. To God. But as God himself.

[15:36] Now we may choose to disbelieve him. But he cannot be. Can he? One truth amongst many. We don't have that option. See these claims.

Or these opening words of John's gospel. They are utterly staggering. They are claiming to shape all of reality. They claim that Jesus is the beginning of all reality.

He's God. And they are staggering. Earth shattering claims. So let's look on. Let's look on then. See two key. Implications flowing out.

In verses four and five. So first in verse four. Jesus is the beginning of all reality. And. The source of all life. So the result.

Of the words activity. In the beginning. Was not just. The creation of the world itself. But of life within it. Again look at verse three.

[16:36] All things were made through him. And without him. Was not anything made. That was made. In him. Was life. So we've been taken beyond.

The initial act. Of creation itself. And to the ongoing sustenance. Of the universe. The word is. The life giver. In fact.

All life derives from him. As the apostle Paul puts. In act 17. In him. We live. We move. And have our being.

Every breath that we take. Every beat of our heart. Every moment we live. Is granted by him.

Sustained by him. Jesus is the source.

Of life. Life. But he's not merely. The source of physical life. As you read on. Through the gospel. You'll see that John uses this word.

[17:35] Again and again. Life. Over and over. And he doesn't use it. Just to merely reflect. The physical creation. Something more. Is often meant.

Life in all its fullness. True life. Life. In God's eternal family. Life beyond the grave. That's what he's talking about. And John is laying the groundwork here.

For what will follow later. When in chapter 14. Jesus speaks these words. He says. I am the way. The truth. And the life. In him. Is not just.

Biological life. But also. Spiritual life. He can create the world. The physical world. Which will in the end die. But he also creates.

Eternal beings. Who will never die. In him. Is life. Ever since. Adam and Eve. Were banished from the garden.

[18:32] And from the tree of life. The issue of life and death. Has been one of the major themes. Of the Old Testament. It goes on through the New Testament. Isaiah speaks.

Of the shroud of death. That unfolds all people. And he anticipates a day. When death will be swallowed up. When it will be no more. And it's only in Jesus.

Only in him. That life. Life that defeats death. Is found. Only in him. He is the source of life. Not just. Of creation here and now.

But of a new creation. That stretches out. Beyond. Death. That is the great hope. Of the gospel. And that is. As you remember. From last week.

John's great purpose. That we believe. The testimony recorded. In this book. And believe it. And so have life. Life for all eternity.

[19:30] Life in all its beauty. And wonder. Life in all its life. Life. Life is found. Only. In Jesus name. Because he is. As we see here. He is the source. Of that life.

Life. Is restored. To the dead. By him. Who is the author of life. In the beginning. And that's the one. That we're being introduced to here. At the start of John's gospel.

Now you kind of wonder. Don't you. What. Sort of impression. These words would have. On those who first read them. It must have been.

Absolutely overwhelming. Wasn't it. To read these words. To think about the implications. And the trouble is. We so often. Allow these words. To wash over us.

We're so familiar with them. We miss the immensity. Of what God is saying. Through John. We hear these words. Every Christmas. They just. Wash over our minds.

[20:27] But the immensity. Of what is being said here. Is just staggering. You see it sometimes. You've heard stories. From people using the word. One to one. Remember Richard Bagon.

And talking about. One of his friends. And they had. Encounter with John Lennox. Over and over. You know. One of the great apologists. But as soon as he opened. John's gospel. And read these opening words.

It just smacked him. Between the eyes. The immensity. Of what's being claimed here. It's hard to imagine. Reading these words. For the first time. And feeding them afresh. But we must. These things are huge.

That the power. Behind all powers. Should speak himself. Into a human frame. Putting on a face. And hands. And feet. To dwell amongst us. What unspeakable magnitude.

There is here. This really is the key. To everything. Says John. And given this premise. Everything else. Falls into place. Given the reality.

[21 : 24] Of these opening words. Everything else. Falls into place. One preacher. Put it this way. Think. Of the miracle. Canaan.

You can read it in chapter 2. Where Jesus turns water. Into wine. Now. That's an unheard of thing. If somebody could do that today. There'd be. A billionaire. Wouldn't there? Turn water.

Into wine. Like that. But if Christ. Who is. Who he claims to be here. If he is the eternal word. Who made all things. Who invented wine.

Then that miracle. Becomes not only understandable. But inevitable. He's the source of life. Of course he can do it. Of course he can take a dead body.

And bring it to life. He's the author of life. It's inevitable. And that is the kind of message. That John is eager. To put across here. Of course he can grant life.

[22 : 20] He's the author of life. And that life is found. Only in him. He's the source. And so searching for life. In any other place.

Is utterly futile. Isn't it? It's like the chap. My wife was chatting to yesterday. Futile. To search for meaning. In those other places. It's only in this one place.

We need. The very source of life. To step down. Into this world. And show us the way. And he's done it. The author of life. Has come. That is John's claim.

Jesus. Is the beginning. Of all reality. And the source of life. That's the first. Implication. Flowing out. From these.

First verses. Secondly. Look at verse five. Jesus is the beginning. Of all reality. And the shiner of light. Just read again. Those words.

[23 : 18] 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. The light. The light. Of men. The light. Of men. So verse four. Tells us. That in him. In the word. In Jesus. Was life. And that life.

Was the light. Of men. He is the true light. Of all men. Now whether. People see it or not. Whether they walk in it.

Or not. All the light. That men and women have. In this world. Comes from this one source. So anything. That we understand rightly. Any truths.

That we happen. To stumble upon. Whether that be. In the field of maths. Or chemistry. Or physics. Or philosophy. Anything that we rightly. Understand. Is because we've been given. Light.

[24 : 12] By the creator. He enables us. To understand. And see. But it's not just. That we've been able. To see true things. In the realm of science. And maths.

God has. In his creation. Revealed things. Of himself. The apostle Paul. In his letter. To the Romans. Writes this. For what can be known.

About God. Is plain to them. Because God. Has shown it to them. For his invisible. Attributes. Namely. His eternal power. And divine nature. Have been clearly.

Perceived. Ever since the creation. Of the world. In the things. That have been made. So they are without. Excuse. But even more than that.

God has given. Specific. Revelation. Of himself. Is contained. In the scriptures. And yet. The Old Testament. Scriptures. On their own. Are not. The full. Revelation.

[25 : 09] Of God. To man. Those scriptures. Pointed forward. Didn't they? They pointed forward. To the full. And final rescue. For mankind. From their plight. The scriptures. Spoke. Of promises. Not yet fulfilled.

There was. More to come. As God. Revealed himself. Ultimately. In one person. In the word. The one that John. Speaks of here. In these last days.

He has spoken to us. By a son. Jesus is. The ultimate. And final revelation. Of God. To humankind. Through all that he said. Through all that he did.

He was the image. Of the father. And so he could say. In John 14. Whoever has seen me. Has seen the father.

Jesus is the light. He is the light. Of revelation. He is the light. Of salvation. But how do people respond.

[26 : 09] To this light. Look at verse five. It's a bit jarring. Isn't it? Verse five. Up until now.

It's all been. Wonderful. Hasn't it? These opening words. With John. We see wonderful truths. About the creation of the world. About Jesus. The source. Of life. And light. But suddenly. John inserts. This idea. Of darkness. It's darkness. As in the total. Absence. Of light. Thick. Heavy. Darkness. Now. When was the last time. You experienced that. I wonder. Real total darkness. It's very rare.

To experience that. Particularly. Living in a city. Like Glasgow. You can't escape. Light.

Everywhere. And looking at our world. From space. You would think.

[27 : 08] That we're doing. All that we can. To eliminate darkness. Every year. Apparently. We expand. The square mileage. Of light. Covering the earth. By two percent.

So we're gradually. Expanding. Bit by bit. The globe. That's covered by light. But actually. According to the Bible. Darkness. Is something. That we enjoy. You see.

In Bible terms. Darkness. Is this world. It's a world. Without God's son. It's an absence. Of life. An absence. Of Jesus. It's an absence. Of everything.

That's good. And we weren't designed. Well. We weren't designed. To live. In darkness. We were designed. For. A relationship. With the author.

Of creation. With God himself. A relationship. We turned. Our back on. And so. To darkness. We turned. And whilst.

[28 : 02] We weren't made. For darkness. The thing is. The longer. You spend. In darkness. The more. Your eyes. Become accustomed. To the gloom. And so. Humanity.

Has come. To love. Darkness. In John 3. We read. These penetrating. Words. He says. The light. Has come. Into the world. And people.

Loved. The darkness. Rather than the light. Because. Their works. Were evil. For everyone. Who does wicked. Things. Hates the light. Lest his works. Should be exposed.

You see. Darkness. Is a clear. Metaphyl. For evil. And opposition. To Jesus. Jesus. And light. Is that great metaphor. Of salvation. And life.

In Jesus. But the sad reality. Is. As we know. Only too well. That whilst. The light of God. Has shone. From the beginning. Of time.

[28 : 59] Into the hearts. Of men. Mankind. Persistently. Refused. To see. To understand. Our world. Has not. Understood. The light. In fact.

It's rejected. It. And a world. In darkness. Is a world. Of deep confusion. You see. Without Jesus. Without his light. None of us.

Can see anything. Properly. Sure. We can see. And understand. Lots of true things. But we can never really. See. Anything truly. We can never know.

The source of life itself. If we refuse the light. And men love darkness. Rather than light. And that is a great tragedy. We don't have to look far.

Do we? To see the evidence. Of that love of darkness. We don't even need to look. Beyond the borders. Of our own hearts. Brokenness. And shame.

[29 : 54] Is everywhere. And that is the sobering reality. We need to come to terms with. At the end of these opening words. In John's gospel. Great.

And wonderful truths. We see here. About. The source of all reality. Great. And earth. Shattering truths. About the person. At the source of all reality. But the terrible reality is.

So many in this world. Don't want to know. And the reason for that. We're told. Is because Jesus. Is the light of the world. Will expose hearts. He will expose.

Our evil deeds. And he wants to be exposed. The things that we. Keep to ourselves. The things that we know. That aren't quite right.

But we've suppressed. Our conscience. So much. That the deed itself. No longer provokes. Any sort of sense of guilt. Or regret. In our lives. People don't want.

[30 : 51] To give up those things. And so. As the searching. Penetrating light. Of God's. Gospel. Begins to shine upon us. We by nature.

Recoil. We hide away. See. It's only by his grace. At work. That any of us. Begin to turn towards the light. And not run from it.

John is realistic here. Isn't he? There are two sides. There are two responses. Walk into the light.

And say. Know the source of life. Or stay hidden in the shadows.

And live in darkness now. And for all eternity. And John's appeal to you. Is to turn. Turn to the light.

And say.

Know life. Don't turn away. That's John's great appeal. But the wonderful. But also terrifying thing is.

[31 : 49] That it doesn't matter. How much opposition there is. To the light. The darkness will never. Overcome it. In the end. That's the resounding note.

At the end of chapter. At the end of verse five. The light. Defeats darkness. And that is ultimately true. For the destiny of our world.

The light will fully. And finally shine. In every corner. Darkness will be no longer. Look at verse five again. The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not.

Overcome it. In other words. The light has not. Been defeated. The darkness cannot. Defeat the light. How could it? Darkness never stands a chance.

In the face of light. So what hope. The forces of evil. In the face of the creator God. The total mismatch. Isn't it? It's not at all like.

[32 : 45] The notion of Greek. Dualism. Where you have equal forces. Of light and dark. Battling away. In the cosmos. Which one's going to win? Hangs in the balance. It's not like that.

That is not the story. Of the Bible. It's not like. Star Wars. Where you have. Equalling. Battling equals. Sometimes things go in favor of one side.

Sometimes in favor of the other. It's not like that at all. The light has shone. In the darkness. And the darkness. Is totally obliterated. That is the ultimate destiny.

Of this world. And of all people. In this world. God. And it's inevitable. That is inevitable. Because Jesus is the source of all life.

And he will not in the end. Be overcome. So do we see the sheer magnitude. Of what John is claiming here about Jesus.

[33 : 43] These aren't small things. These aren't small claims. These claims have implications. For every single one of us. Here in this room. They have implications.

For every single person. Walking outside our door. In our city. In our world. And John would urge you. Urge everyone. To respond to this Jesus.

To turn to him. To trust him. And so know life. Because only in him. Are these things to be found. He's the source of it all. There's nowhere else. Only in Jesus.

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.

[34 : 46] The light shines. In the darkness. And the darkness. Has not. Overcome it. Well let's pray. Our father God.

We do thank you. For these great words. And we can barely begin. To get our minds around them. Let alone articulate.

The truths contained. So father help us. Help us to respond. In belief. To these words. So that we might know life.

And lord help us to be those. Who are eager. And willing to share that. Because these are public truths. These aren't private matters. So please help us.

Each of us. To go from this place. Eager to point others. To the source. Of all reality. Help us to that end. Before we ask it.

[35 : 53] In Jesus name. Amen.