

A World Changing Revelation

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[0 : 0 0] Continuing our studies in John's gospel, but before we turn to our reading, we're going to watch a short video because as we study John's gospel together, we're not just doing it to be edified ourselves, but we're doing it to be equipped so that we might be able to open up John's gospel and help other people to find the life that we've been seeing is offered through the Lord Jesus. There's a clip here about something called the Word One-to-One.

Today we live in a biblically ignorant age. Our friends simply don't know what the best-selling book in the world actually says. They haven't opened one in years. In fact, if they've got one, it's probably collecting dust on a shelf somewhere at home. They know it probably contains some really useful stuff. They just haven't looked. And when it comes to the real issues of life, they're surprisingly open to admitting they do not have any serious answers.

Now, this does not mean that your friends are ready or willing to think about Christianity or willing to think about going to church. Actually, why would they? But perhaps it does mean that they would be interested in just seeing what the Bible actually says. We have written the word one-to-one so that it can be used by anyone. That means for you and your friends and your circle of contacts, a circle which will be unique to you.

First, you need to ask somebody. Ask a friend if they want to read the Bible with you. While that may sound scary, there are many people who want to find out what the Bible really says. They just need some help in doing it. I thought that it would be hard to ask my friend to read the Bible with me, but actually it was pretty simple. I was really excited and surprised that my friend actually wanted to read the gospel with me. Everything you need to read the Bible with a friend is contained in this resource. It's designed in such a way that it's simple to use. Because on the left here is John's gospel in plain, clear English, and it's broken down into chunks, so it's really not that overwhelming. I like that there's no physical Bible involved, so we can read the material anywhere without her feeling awkward.

In the middle section, there are questions and comments. You can use these however you like. You may wish to do it rhetorically so your friend sits there and listens, or you could do it interactively. The book has these really helpful sections to help you explain historical context as well as the context of the passage. The answers are here on the right-hand side. This means that your friend has no embarrassment if they don't know the answer, and you have confidence in explaining what the Bible passage means. It's so simple that anyone can do it. It was really fantastic to see the Bible really come to life as she read it for herself. But it's so important that everyone really must try it. And as you do, you present Jesus to your friends through his word.

[3 : 1 9] We hope that you'll be able to discover by looking at John, the clarity and the power of God's word. You can buy, but also I know Mark Campbell would love to chat to you and encourage you and support you in any way possible on that. So do feel free to speak to him after the service.

I know of someone just this week who started reading it for the first time, and they're keen to start reading John's gospel again with their friend. So it really does show that people are willing to read what the Bible says. We just need to be active in asking them. Well, we're going to start looking at John's gospel again. And last week we were looking at verses 1 to 5 of John 1.

And this week we're going to be looking at verses 9 to 13. Don't worry if you think we're skipping some out. We'll return to verses 6 to 8 in a few weeks' time. But for now we're going to read verses 1 to 5 and then our passage for today, verses 9 to 13. John 1, beginning verse 1.

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. And now verse 9. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

[5 : 21] 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 by blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Before we turn to this again, let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you are a speaking God, that you're a God who reveals to us that we might know. And so as we look at these words now, we do pray that you would be speaking again.

Amen. Help us to leave aside all that would distract us, that we might focus on your word, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Marmite has become common parlance for something that is polarizing. It's either love or hate. There isn't really a middle ground with it. I love Marmite. Warm toast, melted butter, and a large smearing of Marmite. Yum. My brother can't stand it. It's enough to turn his stomach.

Even the smell of it puts him off. Now, it's all very well being divided on something as trivial as Marmite. But what John is telling us in this passage is that the light of the world, Jesus, was coming into the world, and there's nothing more polarizing than the light that he would shine upon who God is, and the light that he would shine on each of us.

[7 : 19] And so John tells us of the world-changing revelation that is Jesus, and then he tells us of two possible responses, rejection or relationship.

So let's look firstly in verse 9 at the world-changing revelation. World-changing revelation. The word who created the world, the word who has always existed with God, the word who brings life, was coming into the world.

That's what we read in verse 9. Jesus is God's great and ultimate revelation. He is the light who, verse 9, is the true light. And we're told he was coming into the world.

Now, we need to understand what is meant by light here. There's a lot of talk in John's gospel about light and darkness. And darkness is what life is like without God.

Darkness is what humanity is born into. Darkness is this world with its hatred of God. But here, light means God literally bringing to light the truth.

[8 : 35] Light is the revelation of God's goodness and his salvation from darkness and evil through Jesus. Now, we see that all men have some of that light revealed to them.

Verse 9, the true light which enlightens everyone in some sense. And Paul tells us in Romans 1 that we can see some of that light through creation itself.

So something of the truth has been given to all men. But the true light, the complete encapsulation of God, of truth, of goodness, of salvation, is the person of Jesus who is himself God.

It is Jesus himself who is the ultimate revelation. Because as he comes into the world, he is God himself. Now, we'll see more of this next week, but enough to point it out for an eye.

The fact that Jesus was coming into the world shows that God is not aloof. He's not distant and cold. God intervenes in this world for the benefit of any who believe.

[9 : 53] Verse 9, the light was coming into the world. It wasn't staying far off and distant. The word was coming into the world so that people could know fully, finally, what it is to escape darkness, to escape evil, and to come to know life as it should be.

So if we want to know what life is to be like and what our life is truly like, where do we look? If we want to know what this world really looks like, who will show us?

If we want to know about our own destinies, if we want to know about the ultimate questions of life and death and the universe, then where do we go? Well, John's answer to us is that we go to the light.

We go to the one who literally brings these things to light, who shows them to us, who answers them, the Lord Jesus himself. And so if we read John's gospel, we will get these answers in the person of Jesus.

Now, we might read verse 9 and see that light is given to everyone. And we might think that, what's the big deal in all of this? Surely, we'll all be okay in the end.

[11 : 09] Jesus is a good guy. Look, he has something for everything. I'll be fine. I don't really need him. He's already given me what I need. Many people do think that way.

But if that is how you think, then John's gospel couldn't disagree with you more. The revelation of the light, Jesus himself, is a polarizing thing, just like Marmite.

Listen to how one preacher puts it. Saying of the light, it not only shines forth the glory of God for all to see, so that all are without excuse, it also shines upon all men, lighting them up, showing what they are, and making abundantly clear what is hidden in deep darkness.

It sheds light on whether they are lovers of the light, or lovers of darkness who hate the light. The message of John is that there is a way out of darkness, but there's only one way out of it, and that is through Jesus coming into the world, for he is God's full, final revelation.

He is the light that shows up all that's wrong and untrue. So, none of us need to despair, because God has revealed this to us.

[12 : 39] We don't have to fumble around in the dark to hope for a way out. We don't have to wonder if God will be merciful the last day. We're told here that the light has come into the world.

And so, John leads us on to those two responses to the light that are possible. Firstly, verses 10 and 11, he shows us that the first response to the light is a woeful rejection.

A woeful rejection. Jesus, the light of the world, exposes those who really love darkness. John tells us in verse 10 that the one who created this world was in the world, yet the world did not know him.

The rejection is twofold. First, we see here it's the broad sense the world did not know him. Now, the use of that word know here is not like when my wife tells me about some artist that she loves and I think, who?

I don't know who that is. The use of the word know here is the intimate knowing that a married couple have. The Bible often uses know in that way.

- [13 : 54] Adam knew his wife and they conceived. It cannot be simply that the world didn't know anything about him because we've just seen in verse 9 that he gives light to everyone.
- No, this isn't ignorance. This is rejection. The light came into the world, but the world preferred darkness. That's what John is saying.
- All those good and right and true came into the world and the world didn't want it. That's a realistic picture of humanity. Happy in darkness.
- Darkness is preferable to Jesus. Even if we know that he is who he says he is, darkness is easier. Darkness is more desirable. C.S. Lewis puts it well when he says, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak.
- We're half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea, we're far too easily pleased.
- [15 : 13] Darkness can seem like it offers us more. It's more immediately tangible. We might see some fleeting pleasure or benefit in it but it is at best ephemeral.
- It's the mud pies. Jesus offers light. He offers the fullest, grandest joy but what John's telling us is that most of the world are happy in darkness.
- So the rejection is firstly broad in the sense of the world but secondly it's more than that because verse 11 even those who were expecting him, his own people, well they wouldn't receive him either.
- For all the messages of the Old Testament which tell again and again that Jesus would come, even those who inherited these promises, they rejected him too.
- So as we read through these verses there's a shock for us. Is it easy to believe? Will everyone be okay? Does it really matter what we think about Jesus?
- [16 : 26] Well we're starting to see here that if we choose to scorn a relationship with him in the present, then we're proving that we love darkness. Even those who should have welcomed Jesus the most, they saw the light and they hated it because it showed up that they were in darkness.
- That's very often the response to the proper preaching of Jesus. Some people just cannot stand it at all. It angers them, it makes their blood boil, it gets under their skin and you can see the reaction, revulsion towards what God says.
- But that is because when face to face with a light, it only serves to show what they love most. And it isn't what is good and right and true.
- It's then proving that what they love is darkness. This response of rejection is the main focus throughout the first half of John's gospel.
- There's no middle ground. John's clear refusing Jesus, choosing darkness, settling for mud pies, is choosing condemnation.
- [17 : 41] It's refusing the offer of eternal life, refusing to ever have an intimate knowing of God himself. Turn over in John's gospel to John chapter 3.
- John 3. John 3. We see this very clearly in verses 18 to 20. John 3, verses 18 to 20.
- Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- God. And this is the judgment. 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 and does not come to the light lest his work should be exposed. a woeful rejection that's saying I love playing around in the mud.

[18 : 55] I love the darkness. Well, it only leads to one place. A woeful rejection. But there is a second response and this is why John has written his gospel.

The second response leads to a world changing relationship verses 12 to 13. A world changing relationship. Jesus, the light of the world draws those who want to escape darkness to true and lasting life.

For those who love the light, for those who see Jesus and are drawn to him, for those who hear his word and want to have more of it, then there is a very real and a very great hope.

As we've been seeing, John is writing this gospel so that people can ultimately have life through Jesus and that is the offer. And we see two things that this life involves.

Look at verse 12. Life with Jesus is being brought into a new family, being given the right to become children of God.

[20 : 09] Life with Jesus is the offer of adoption into God's family. The word that's used there in verse 12 for right comes with God's complete authority.

Jesus offers instant, total adoption into God's family. And so he offers the right to the treasure of God's family. I have a friend who loves the royal family, adores the queen.

My friend would love to have been born into the family to enjoy all the privileges of being a prince or princess, to enjoy the privilege of the palaces and all that comes with being part of the royal family. Well, John is telling us here that we can become part of the royal family.

We can become part of God's family. And that means there's an offer to enjoy a greater wealth and treasure than we could ever imagine. For this isn't just belonging to a royal family, Jesus offers us the right to belong to his father's family, to belong to the one who created the world, verse three, to belong to the family of the one who gives life, to belong to the family of the one who sustains the world.

Jesus offers to us a way out of darkness, out of darkness, but into his family. The apostle Paul says it like this, for Christians, God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

[21 : 51] That's what it means to be a Christian. That's what the great revelation of light offers. That is what Jesus offers to anyone. A world-changing transfer from darkness to light, from spiritual death to spiritual life, from enemies of God to children of God.

We can be treated as Jesus is treated, as a son. We can, with Jesus, cry out to God and call him Father.

We can turn to God with confidence that he's a loving Father who truly cares for us, a Father who won't let us down, as so often human fathers can do.

He doesn't say that we need to earn a place in his family. He doesn't say that we have to be worthy of a place at his table. He simply says, believe in Jesus and you're my children forever.

You can cry out to me, I will hear you. John tells us that if we have Jesus, we have a new family. But he also tells us that those who belong to the family have gone through a new birth.

[23 : 05] verse 13. When we're born, we don't pick our families. As far as we're concerned, we don't do anything to be born.

And John tells us that that is true for our new family if we're a Christian. Being adopted by God as his child means going through a new birth. But what kind of birth is it?

Well, John tells us three things the birth isn't in verse 13 before telling us what it is. So look at verse 13.

First thing that it isn't, not of blood. Our new birth into God's family isn't to do with human birth, and so it has nothing to do with the family that we're part of.

So whether you're born into a Muslim family or an atheist family or even a Christian family, that isn't the birth that's required to bring you into God's family.

[24 : 10] So it isn't about blood. Secondly, it's not a birth that comes from the will of the flesh. We can't suddenly decide we want to move from death to life.

On our own, we can't possibly make that happen. We can't be smart enough or good enough or anything enough to make ourselves reborn. That is as impossible as trying to decide what family we'd like to be born into as a baby.

Not by blood, not by our own will, and thirdly, not by the will of man. No one can force this upon us. No one can make it happen.

No one can choose this path for us. Our parents can't, our husbands and wives can't. So what kind of birth is it?

Verse 13, the very last three words, born of God. God, it's a spiritual birth.

[25 : 20] It is God working in us so that in a very real way we're new people. That's what Jesus offers us. That's what the new life is. That's what Jesus has come to bring.

All over chapter one of John's gospel, there's language that points to creation. It echoes very closely Genesis one, doesn't it? But John here isn't writing about creation.

He's writing to tell us about a new creation. And that new creation is us. Jesus offers new life to us so that in a very real way we can leave behind an old life that was dead, an old life that was in darkness, an old life that was controlled completely by a love for darkness.

darkness. I have a friend, let's call him Ethan, who was telling me about the mess that had come about from how he was living his life, his sin, his love for the darkness.

It caused his wife and his child to leave him. But he said that since he'd become a Christian, things had changed. His family was getting back together. And the reason for that was because his family could see that the old Ethan was dead, and there was a new Ethan.

[26 : 41] That's how he described it. His old life was left behind and he had a new life. A new life in God's family so that with Jesus he could call him father.

A new life that could leave behind all that this world loves. And because the new life that we have with Jesus is God's work within us, remember it's not by our will, it's not by our blood, it's God's work within us.

And because that's true we can be sure that if we receive Jesus we will have a life that will look different. God will be at work within us.

So Jesus offers a world-changing relationship, a new family and a new birth, but how do we take hold of this offer? How do we take hold of the life that Jesus offers?

Well look again at verse 12. To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

[27 : 53] What do we do? Receive Jesus, believe in him, nothing else will do. God tells us our family doesn't matter, our intellect, our effort, they don't matter.

What other people want us to do doesn't matter. As you hear God's word, as you come face to face with Jesus, receive him, believe in his name, open up to his word, and you will have the right to become children of God, drawn out of darkness to the light of God's son.

That's all we have to do. Receive him and believe in him. Let's pray. Father, we do ask that you would always turn us to Jesus, protect us from all that the world would have us love instead of him, and help us to see the darkness of this world for what it is, and so be drawn ever more to the light of your son.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.