

In the Beginning Was the Word
John 1:1-5
Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 11, 2022

Sorry for the delay I got caught up downstairs with my little one. It is dangerous down there. Wow, very grateful for all those who teach the kids every week, it's quite a commitment. They do a wonderful job, amen? And keep praying for them.

Well, as you can tell by listening to the music, it's Christmas time here at Grace. It's the season of the year when we lay aside a few weeks to sing about our Saviour's birth and preach about it and teach about it and talk about it from the pulpit, and do some special events like our banquet this evening, which is an important thing to do. Because if you think about it, we only have two holidays as a church, we have Christmas and we have Easter. We celebrate Jesus' birth, and we celebrate His resurrection. But other than that, we don't really have any other events like this on the calendar. So we have to make the most of it every opportunity that we have. I was thinking about that this past week and the Jews had seven holidays in the Old Testament. And it was said that they spent so much time celebrating them that about a third of the year was taken up in those events. And that's very different from what we do in the New Covenant. And so we really want to make a big deal of this when we can. I know this can be a struggle for some people this time of year because Christmas can seem very worldly, said that this last week, make it look so commercialized, that it leaves a bad taste in your mouth. And I understand that. But I want to let you know if you're worried about that here, you don't need to be. We're not interested in doing that sort of thing. As a church, we want to put Christ on display, amen? And we want to use this time to glorify Him so that our songs glorify Him and our services glorify Him and our sermons lift Him high on the throne. And in order to do that, this morning, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John.

So if you have your Bible with you today, please turn with me into the fourth book of the New Testament, the Gospel of John because that's where we're at for today. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, you need to know we are doing something different for the holidays here in the pulpit. Because we're beginning a brand new series called Christmas in the Gospel of John, where each one of our elders is going to take you verse by verse through John chapter one; so you can see what it says about Jesus and believe it, because that's why John wrote his gospel. In John 20:30, you don't have to turn there, but I just want to quote it to you because it gives you John's mission statement for this book. When it says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been written so that you may believe." That's why John wrote this gospel. That's why it's in the Bible for you to read, so you may believe in Jesus. John didn't do that so you would read these stories and say, "Oh, that's nice." And he didn't do it so you would look at all this material and say, "Oh, how interesting. That makes me feel spiritual." No, he did it so you would have a greater response, bow the knee to Christ and give your life over to Him. And with that in mind, he starts off his gospel this way. In chapter one, if you read in verse one, it says this, it says,

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing

came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John, He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 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 saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

And we're going to end the reading there, but as you read that, you might be wondering, well, what does that mean? Why does John start off his gospel this way? Because if you notice, he doesn't start out like the other gospels do. If you've read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you can tell this doesn't sound anything like what they say. Because when they begin their gospels, they talk about Jesus' birth, and His genealogy, and His ancestors, and the shepherds, and the wise men, and the manger, and all of that. But when John starts off, it's completely different, because he wanted to go back to the time before the birth, before the shepherds, before the wise man, in order to say these words, in the beginning was the Word. Now, if you look in verse one, you can tell right off the bat, that's in the past tense, to show you that the word was there, already there in the beginning, and Jesus was already present when God created the earth, because He's eternal. Which means there never was a time when Jesus was not. He always existed in eternity past with the Father. This phrase "in the beginning." It's also reminiscent of another book in the Bible, and that's the book of Genesis. Because Genesis one verse one says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," which shows you that in the beginning, there was nothing there but God. At the start of all things, there was no one around but Yahweh. You weren't there and I wasn't there. The plants weren't there, and the animals weren't there, the sun wasn't there, and the moon wasn't there. And the stars weren't there or the planets. But you know who was there? Jesus was there. Do you know who was present when all of that was formed? Christ was present, because it says so right here. Which means you can take your mind as far back as you want to in time, and you'll find Jesus there. And you can go back as deep as you want to into eternity, and Jesus is deeper still. I don't know about you, but when I think of a big number, I think of a billion years. Well, you can take your mind back a billion years, and you'll find the Son of God. You can

do a trillion years, it's the same way because when He was born that was not the start of Him. That's what John chapter one means. His story goes back long before that.

That's quite a way to start a gospel, isn't it? That's quite a thing to say at the beginning of your book. And that's John's intention here. He wants to write this book in such a way that it shocks you out of your apathy, because it puts Christ higher and higher and higher on the throne. You can't get any higher than John chapter one. You can't think of anything greater to say about someone than this. And the reason I want to make a point of it here at the beginning is because I think that this is not the way a lot of people look at Jesus today, is it? This is very different from the way a lot of folks even in church perceive Him. They don't have a high view of Christ. They don't put Him on the throne. They think He's just a man. He's just like everybody else, just another founder of a religion. Maybe like Buddha, or Gandhi, or someone.

In fact, in my studies this week, I came across a book that discussed six theories about who Jesus is from the perspective of those who don't believe He's God. And I just want to mention them to you. The first one is the myth theory, which says that His deity was a myth because it was created by His followers after He died in order to raise Him up in their esteem. But Jesus didn't teach that. That's not what He said. The second one is the moral teacher theory, which says that Jesus was a great moral teacher, but that's all. He lived a good and decent life, but it was nothing beyond that. The third one is a little harsher. It's the psychotic theory, which says Jesus was psychotic on the same level as a man who thinks He's the king of England. The next one was the deceiver theory, which says He was just a fraud, who lied to people on purpose, misled them. Another one was the Guru theory, which says He's a guru, kind of like a yoga teacher. And then finally, there's the Alien theory. I don't even know how you would believe this, but it says He came from another planet and was an extra-terrestrial. Now, the problem with those ideas is that you can just read this chapter and see that's not what John says here, is it? He says He's God. He makes it very clear that Jesus had a divine nature. He wasn't an alien. He wasn't a guru. He wasn't a deceiver. He was the Lord of heaven and earth. There's no other way to take this chapter. You could read it over and over again, and there's no other conclusion that you can come to because John says it as clearly as he could.

Verse 14, further down in this passage, says "And the Word became flesh." And that's interesting because it means the flesh did not become the Word, the Word became flesh. Jesus did not have become God once He got here, He was God when He arrived. He shared the same being as the Lord Himself, the same essence of character. And we need to learn how to see Him this way because you can't make sense of the Bible if you don't do that. I know there's some people, maybe even here this morning, who really struggle with the deity of Christ. They can't understand how this is possible. But let me just ask you one question. Why is it not possible? We're talking about God here. Why is it too much for God to become a man? What's stopping him? What's keeping him from fulfilling what John chapter one talks about? And that's what we're going to look at this morning.

Because if you're taking notes, we're going to look at five things we learned about Jesus in this passage. So that's our outline for today. But in John one, just in the first five verses, we're going to look at five things we learned about Christ in this passage. And to be honest, I said this last week, but I'm really excited about this sermon because this is one of the most intriguing parts of Scripture. John one

has been called the clearest presentation of Jesus' deity that's found anywhere in the world because it answers the question, who is Christ in just a few short verses, and yet, what it says is so profound, you're going to be studying this for all eternity. You could spend forever looking at this one chapter, and you'll never get to the bottom of it. But the point of it's very clear on the front end, and that is that you can never think too highly of Jesus. No matter how hard you try, you can never give Him enough glory because He always deserves more. And we're going to look at that with five things we learn about Him here.

The first one is that He is the word. And as we like to do here at Grace, all these are going to follow right from the text. But the first thing we learn about Christ is that He is the word, which means that He's sovereign. That's just another way of saying that He is the one who rules over at all.

And I've already said a little bit about why John wrote this gospel, but I want to say a little more because we're looking at the first words of the Gospel of John. And you can't do that without taking a step back and talking about who John was as an author, because he was one of Jesus's closest disciples. If you remember your Bible history here for a moment, along with Peter and James, John was one of the inner circle of three that the Lord took with Him everywhere that He went. He had 12 disciples, but there were three men that He would take aside and go do things with like raising Jairus' daughter, or going to the Mount of Transfiguration, or going to the garden of Gethsemane. John got to see all that. He was one of the few people that had that privilege, and as such, he felt an obligation to write that all down for posterity's sake. That's the Gospel of John. He wanted you to see it thousands of years later. John 19 also says that he adopted Mary as his mother after Jesus died because when the Lord was on the cross, He told John, "Behold your mother," and He told Mary, "Woman, behold your son," which gave John unlimited access to her. It gave him complete and total freedom to ask her any question that he wanted to about the Lord. And in my mind's eye, I just see the two of them sitting by the fireplace swapping stories about Jesus, and John having his pen and writing them down. Some even claim that he wrote after Matthew, Mark, and Luke had already completed their accounts of the life of Christ, because John lived, from what time historians tell us until about the 90s AD. He was the last apostle to die, and so he knew what they had said, and he made sure he didn't repeat anything. Which is probably true, because 90% of the material in John's Gospel is completely original to the book. It's found nowhere else in Scripture, which is why you never find any parables in the Gospel of John. When you read this gospel, you'll never read about Christ's baptism, or temptation, or the transfiguration, or the Sermon on the Mount, because John knew that stuff had already been covered. It was already written about in the other books, and so he wanted to give you something completely new, which is why he starts off this way in verse one by saying "In the beginning was the Word." The reason John does that is because he knew the other three gospels had already talked about the birth of Christ from a historical perspective or a biographical perspective, so John wanted to do it from a doctrinal one.

Because in the beginning was the Word. Who was there in the beginning? Christ was there, Jesus was there, because it calls Him the Word of God here. And that term "word" is an interesting one because it's loaded with lots of meaning. It's the Greek term *logos*. If you're taking notes, you might want to write that down next to this verse. It's spelled l o g o s /*logos*. It's very important because it's a term that Greek philosophers used at this time in order to describe the reason or cause of everything that exists. I was a philosophy major. In University I studied philosophy. And the first time I read about *logos*, I read

it in the writings of Aristotle or people like that. And for example, one philosopher from the sixth century BC named Heraclitus is considered to be the first one to use this term. And he had an interesting story connected to it because as he was reflecting on his life, Heraclitus was standing by a river when it occurred to him that you can't step into the same river twice, because it's constantly in flux. You can't put your foot into the same body of water on two different occasions because the river is always moving. But at the same time, Heraclitus observed that it's not in utter chaos. The river has some semblance of order, and he wondered why. He couldn't figure it out. And the best explanation he could come to was this word *logos*. Even as a lost pagan, Heraclitus understood that the reason this world is as peaceful as it is, and calm as it is, and tranquil as it is, is because there must be something holding it all together, and you use this one term in order to describe it. Doesn't that put some lights off in your head? Doesn't that make a lot of sense?

In theological circles, this is called the teleological argument, or the argument from design, which says that one way you know God exists, is because of the design you see around you. Everything looks so nice and neat in the universe. You woke up today and the sun came up, didn't it? I mean, somewhere in the world, not here in Chilliwack. The sun will come up in April, I promise you just give it time. And you'll go to sleep tonight, knowing that it's going to come up again tomorrow, you don't have to worry about that. You don't have to fret why because something did that. There's a higher power overseeing it all. That's what this word refers to in Greek. John compares that same power to Jesus; everybody knew what the *logos* was in the first century. Everybody had all these ideas in their head connected to it. And John ties this into Christ.

This term is also important because the Jews used it in the first century as well. Because they considered the *logos* to be the force behind every living thing too, but they connected it to the Word of God. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God said, "Let there be man," and there was man. He didn't use any natural tools to do that. He didn't start the universe with the Big Bang, or the long process of evolution, He just spoken and it happened. He just used His voice and all this appeared. Psalm 33:6 says, "By the Word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts." And the point is that all that's wrapped up in what John is telling you here about your Saviour. It's pretty deep thing to say, isn't it?. It's very profound. And if we could summarize it into one thing, we could use the word sovereignty. What John is saying at the start of his gospel, is that Jesus Christ is sovereign over the universe. He's the one who rules over it all to the point that He rules over the plants and He rules over the animals. He rules over the land, He rules over the sea, He rules over the sun and the moon and the stars in the galaxy, and He rules over you and me, and all the little things that happen in our lives because He is the *logos*. He's the word which means that there's nothing that will happen to you that He can't handle. There's nothing that's going to take place in your life that's outside of His control, and so you can rest in Him and be completely at peace.

Let's be honest, this is something the world knows nothing about, does it? The lost culture has no concept of peace, which is why they freak out and panic and get depressed all the time. They think there's no rhyme or reason to any of it, and there's nothing overseeing it all. This life is just going anywhere. This past week, I was at the Cottonwood Mall here in Chilliwack. If you want to do something interesting, go to the Cottonwood Mall in the middle of the day during Christmas season. And I was reading a book, a commentary, when a man sat down next to me and started playing the lottery on his

phone. And every few minutes he would tell me "Oh, I just won \$2." And "Oh, I just lost \$5." Because that's what the lottery was like to this guy. It's completely arbitrary. There's no order to any of it, and I think it's safe to say that's the way a lot of people look at their lives. It's just one big lottery game. Throw the sand in the air, whichever way the wind blows. For Christians, John makes it very clear that it's not like that. We know that Jesus Christ is the one ruling over it all. It's not random. It's not arbitrary. It's all in His control.

The story is told of the time a little girl was asked why Jesus is called the Word right here in the Gospel of John. And she said, "I think it's because Jesus is all God wanted to say to us." That's right. In His sovereign will, Christ did everything that was necessary to save us, so you don't need to go anywhere else for your hope.

And that brings me to another thing we learn about Him in this passage. And that is that He is distinct from God, or is distinct from the Father anyway. Say it that way. The first one is that He is the word. The second thing we learned about Christ is that He is distinct from the Father and the Spirit, which means that even though He was here in the beginning with God, the Father, He had His own unique personality apart from Him because He's a trinity. God is a trinity. And I'll explain that in a moment. And frankly, I think this is where some people lose John in this passage. They lose the train of thought because it sounds like he's repeating himself for no reason, but he's not because what he's doing in verse one is that he's taking the doctrine of Christ deity, and looking at it from several different angles. When he says this, he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Now, as you can tell, that's pretty rich, and there's a few things that are being repeated, but it's being done on purpose. For example, John repeats the term "Word" here three times in the verse in order to refer it all to Christ, because that's what his gospel is about. It's all about Jesus. So he begins on that note, and he also repeats the term "was" three times in here, if you look back in your Bibles, to remind you that all this happened in the past. Everything he's describing here took place long ago. In fact, it didn't just take place in the past, we could say it took place in eternity past. And another thing he repeats in this verse is the word "God." He uses it twice here in order to demonstrate that there are two separate people that are being described, there is the Word and there is God. There is the *logos* and there is Christ, which is not to say Jesus is not God. Because the verse goes on to say, "and the Word was God." The reason he's using it this way is to show you that this is what God is like, He's a trinity. He's one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So that each person is fully God, fully divine, and each person is fully distinct. They have their own unique personality.

This phrase, "the Word was with God," it doesn't do justice to what John is actually saying here, because it could be translated, "and the Word was face to face with God, or side by side." Which is something the angels could never do because they don't have this authority. Angels don't stand face to face with God; angels bow. And this is something you and I will never do when we get to heaven. We're not going to be peers with God, but that's what Jesus was because He's equal to Him. They're one in the same when it comes to their nature, Christ and the Father. In fact, I know I'm throwing a lot of doctrine at you this morning, but I have to do that because we're studying a doctrinal passage. And anytime you do that, you have to use some big words to explain what's being expressed here. But

when you look at this passage through the lens of theology, you find that one term that's been often used throughout the years to explain it is the term Ontological Trinity, which says that every member of the Trinity has the same ontology or being. Ontology is the study of essence, or being. And what John is saying here is that every member of the Godhead has the same degree of that, so that they are equal in their worth nature and greatness. It's different from the term Economic Trinity, which says that every member of the Trinity has a different economy or function because they have different jobs to do in the world. The Father sent the Son, the Son came down to earth, the Spirit came afterwards to live inside of us. But it's not because one Person has a higher sense of value than the other. They're all the same. It's the same idea when a man and woman get married. When they do that, they have a different function in the role of marriage, because the husband leads the wife, the wife submits to him. But that's not because they have a different ontology. They have the same nature. They're both fully human. They're both fully equal in that regard, and it's the same concept here.

If you want to look back in verse 14 again, this is what John refers to later on when he says in verse 14, "That the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." And that means that this is how Jesus became a man. He was not created because He already existed. Instead, He dwelt among us. That word can be translated tabernacle. "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us," because just as the Jews set up a tabernacle in the wilderness, that's how Christ came to earth. He set up a tent. He lived His life like that, which is a mysterious thing. And if it's difficult because you feel like you can't wrap your mind around it, let me just remind you that nobody can. It is a mystery. Anytime you talk about the nature of God, you always go into the realm of mystery, but the lesson is simple here; and that is that you cannot be a Christian if you don't believe this. You have no right to call yourself a follower of Christ and be his disciple if you don't embrace this with all your heart. John doesn't write about this in John chapter 20. He writes about it in John chapter one. He doesn't get into this later on in the Gospel because it's a lesser doctrine, he puts it at the beginning because this is what it's all about. There's no middle ground on this. He doesn't give you options as to whether you will embrace the Trinity or not. You have to embrace it because if you don't, you'll go to hell. You need God the Son to save you. You need someone to come from heaven to die for your sins, and that's what Christ did.

I mention that because there are some today who claimed to be Jesus followers and they don't believe that. There are people today who claimed to be His disciples, and they reject the doctrine of the Trinity. I could give you lots of names this morning, I'll just give you a few like the Jehovah's Witness. They claim to be a Christian denomination. They look very zealous knocking on doors and coming to see you on Saturday mornings, but when you look into their writings, you discover that they don't believe this at all. Their founder Charles Taze Russell, once said that Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine. Can you believe that? I don't know how much further off the mark you can get them that that they reject this completely. They're not alone, because the Mormons do that too. Even though they claim to be Christian as well, their founder, Joseph Smith, told his followers that the Trinity is a strange thing to believe about God because it's heresy. That's delusional. That's a deceiver. And we could go on and on with this. There's dozens of cults that make a similar claim, so you have to have discernment in order to spot that sort of thing and avoid it. It doesn't please the Lord. It's been said that everything that glitters is not gold, and everyone who says that they're saved is not. You have to be on your guard.

And that brings you to another thing we learn about Christ in this passage. And that is that He is the creator of everything. This is something we've already talked about a little bit, but we need to say more, because that's what this passage goes on to talk about. But a third thing we learn in this text is that he is the creator of everything, which means that when He was there in the beginning, Jesus was not idle. He was busy creating the universe along with God the Father. If you look in verse one again, I do want to explain one more thing about this because it sets the stage for what he's gonna say next. But it says in verse one, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now that phrase, "The Word was God," that's the last of the three great statements John makes in the first verse. In order to tell you that not only is Jesus the Word or the *logos*, but He is God. Not a god like the Mormons teach, or God-like like the Jehovah's Witnesses believe. He's the same person as God Himself. The reason I'm making a big deal of this is because this verse has probably come under more scrutiny by the cults than any other one in history. Some groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses, point out that the word "God" here is not preceded by the definite article in Greek, so it should be rendered "a god" or "God-like." If you look at the Jehovah's Witness translation of the Bible, it says that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." But the problem with that translation is that it doesn't solve any problems. Because now they're saying there's such a thing as a god in the Bible. They're putting Jesus on the same level as an idol, and that's far worse. The verse is translated accurately when you look at the NASB, or the, I believe, ESV says this, there's a lot of these translations, "and the Word was God." It means anything you can say about God, you can say about Jesus. Any attribute you can give to one, you can give to the other. In Christ dwells all wisdom, glory, power, might, honor, splendor, love, grace, mercy, justice, truth. And in order to give you more details about that, if you look in verse two, this is what he says next. He says,

He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Now, if that doesn't show you that Jesus Christ is God, I don't think anything will. Because after telling you that Jesus was there when God created the world, John says He created it with Him. There's only one thing that can do that, and that's the Lord. There's only one person that has creative abilities. It's not the angels. It's Him. Verse three says, "All things came into being through Him." That means not a few things, but all things. Not a couple of objects, like the animals and plants, but Jesus created everything else, like the sun, moon and stars. It says, "And apart from Him, nothing came into being that has come into being, which says the same thing another way because it tells you that there's nothing that doesn't claim Him as its author. Nothing in the past, present, or future, nothing. Today, tomorrow, or the day after, Jesus was in charge of all of it at its inception. He brought all things into being, which means He took all things in the universe from a state of non being into a state of being. He brought all things in the galaxy from a place of non-existence into a place of existence. And it says that all things came into being through Him, which implies that Jesus was the channel through which all things were formed in a way that we can't fully understand. He was the means through which they originated, so that when you look at objects in the world like a flower, you could think of Christ. When you look at things like a tree, you can have Him in your mind's eye. He's the one who was responsible for creating it, which is not the way a lot of people look at Jesus, is it? That's not where they put Him in their esteem.

But I feel like we need to take a few moments to reflect on this today and let it sink in. Because I talk to people sometimes who tell me they're so afraid because the world is out of control right now. Everything looks like it's so backwards because the devil seems to be getting the upper hand, they feel so small, and that's true, because we do feel small in this world. But not Christ. He's not small. He stands over at all. Even though we feel small, He's greater because all this is His creation. Which tells you that when He saves the world, He knew what He was doing. And when He came to redeem you, He wasn't going to stop until the job was completely perfectly finished because that's the person that He was. He was watching out for you in the beginning, He'll be doing it today. He'll watch out for you down the road, so you should put your life in his hands.

It brings you to another thing that we learn about him in this passage. And that is that in Him was life and light. We're just going through the text here, but a fourth thing we learn about Jesus in the chapter is that in Him was life and light. Which means that in Him was the power to raise the dead and take the darkness away from us because after saying that Jesus is the one who's responsible for creating the world, John goes on to tell you that He created it for this purpose, and that was to save sinners. To bring Him glory. Verse four says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Now, once again, this is just the introduction to John's Gospel. So he doesn't give you a lot of details for some of these concepts. He just mentions them in passing, and as he does that, these are two major themes that you'll see later on in the Gospel if you read through it. And that is the theme of life and light. Both of those themes are repeated at least once per chapter throughout the whole book because if you remember the verse I quoted to you earlier, John 10:30, says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these have been 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." That doesn't mean that believing in Jesus will give you biological life because you already have that. It means that believing in Jesus will bring life to your soul. It'll make you come alive on the inside. Because verse four says in Him was life, which means that Jesus is the source, fountain, origin, and cause of all spiritual life on this earth. He's the spring, root, core, and essence of it, which means if you have Jesus, you are alive. If you don't have Jesus, you're not. Doesn't matter how smart you are, doesn't matter how rich you are, doesn't matter how powerful you are, doesn't matter how many times you go to the synagogue or the mosque. You're not alive without Him. Jesus doesn't take you to the life. He is the life. He doesn't show you the way to life. He is the Way. Buddha said "I know the way to God." Muhammad said, "I'll take you to God." Jesus says, "I am God." Because the idea here is that your soul is completely helpless without Him. It's been said that a man can exist without Christ, but he can't live. He can breathe and move and go about his business, but He can't worship God the way he's supposed to. Because there's a break there. Because his heart is completely dead to Him. That's what this word is referring to here. Jesus did not come to make good people better; He came to make dead men live.

And I didn't have the chance to talk to you about this earlier. But when you study the Gospel of John, you realize that one way you can outline the book is by doing it according to the "I am" statements that are in here. There are seven times Jesus says "I am something" in this gospel. And let me just walk you through this quickly. In John six, He says "I am the bread of life. I am food for the hungry soul." In John eight He says, "I am the light of the world." We'll talk about that in a moment. But I've come to help men see. In John 10 He says, "I am the good shepherd, I am the door for the sheep. You want to go to

heaven, open the door through me." John 14, He says, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life. John 15. He says I am the vine." But the most shocking statement of all some have said is what He says in John 11. When he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." That means "I'm the one who triumphed over death. I'm the one who defeated the grave. I'm the one who put sin to permanent punishment on the cross. So you can rise with me." If you notice, this passage also says, "In Hm was life and the life was the light of men." That means that this is what Christ's life does for you if you believe it, it brings you into the light because it helps you see. I just showed that to the children, but I forgot to ask them "Have you ever walked into a dark room before?" Right? All the children have. What's it like in a dark room? Well you're scared because you can't see anything. Bump into stuff, hit your head on the table. Jesus is the one who's come to solve that problem because He doesn't take you to the light, He is the light. Because your soul is completely blind without Him.

That's what our world is like today too, isn't it? Do I have to tell you this world is blind spiritually? It has no concept of what's really going on inside of it. Knows a lot about what's going on outside but not inside. They know math and science, and they can create wonderful things like cars and airplanes, but they can't stop making abortions. They haven't figured out how to solve the problem of murder because they're blind. Yesterday, several of us got together in order to go out to the Five Corners downtown and sing Christmas carols and share the gospel with the people there. And as we did that, you could tell that a lot of people were polite, and we had some good conversations with the people. But a lot of them just weren't interested. They just wanted to go Christmas shopping. Why? Because they're living in darkness. All they can see is the things that are right there in front of their face. They have no awareness of bigger issues like Heaven and Hell and God and Satan and Angels and Demons and sin and the Gospel and how to live, because if they did, that would change their priorities. If they thought about that they wouldn't shop so much. They'd read their Bibles. They would be running to us to hear what we have to tell them. John says that's what Christ came to deal with. He came to change your priorities, so you would take your mind off yourself so much in all these physical things, and put it up on God where it belongs.

And the story is told of the time, a ship was sailing on the ocean when it saw a light far off in the distance. And it radioed ahead and it said, "Please alter your course 10 degrees north, or we will crash." To which the other vessel replied back and said, "Please alter your course 10 degrees north, or we will crash." And after a few moments, the ship's captain got really mad. And he radioed he said, "I'm the captain, and I will not be told what to do. Alter your course immediately, or I will have you arrested." To which the other vessel replied, "While I'm the lighthouse, and you can arrest me if you like, but I'm gonna have to pick up your pieces first off the shore. Alter your course." John says Jesus has come to say that to a lost and dying world. Alter your course or else you will crash. You need to believe in Me or else you're headed for disaster when you stand before the throne of God. He's the light.

Which brings us to one more thing we can learn about Christ in this text. And just to review these other ones, the first one is that He is the word. And secondly, He is distinct from the Father. Thirdly, He's the creator of all things. And then fourth, He's the life and the light of men, which is the result of all of this. This is the application to the first three verses. Because He's all these wonderful things, Jesus has come to rescue you from the darkness. You don't have a God that doesn't care about you. You don't have a Lord that just sits up on the on the throne and just looks at you and says it's too bad. He came

down to do more. Which frankly, that's enough to end the sermon on. We could say "amen" and go home from here. But John has more to say because he gives you one more thing that we can learn about Christ in this part of the of the chapter. And that is that the darkness did not overcome Him.

A fifth thing we learn about Jesus in this passage is that the darkness did not overcome Him. Which means that since all these other things are true, it leads you to this inevitable conclusion, and that is that the powers of hell could not defeat Him, no matter how hard they tried. Which is what a lot of people are worried about today, isn't it? I think a lot of people are scared that the powers of hell are going to defeat Jesus. John makes it very clear here in the first century that they won't, it's impossible. Because verse five says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

And if you notice in your Bibles, that's the end of the paragraph here in English, and it's the end of the paragraph in Greek as well, because this is how John brings this part of the introduction to a close. And it sounds a little bit anticlimactic in some of our Bibles. But the word for "comprehend" here, "The light shines in the darkness, the darkness did not comprehend it." That's the Greek word *katalambanō*. It's a compound word from *kata* or down and *lumbanō* to throw. It means to throw something down or cast it aside. Interestingly enough, the same word was often used at the time to describe wrestlers who would defeat their opponents by pinning them to the ground and not letting them up. And John says here, the darkness can't do that to Jesus. Since He's the *logos*, and the Word and God and the One who created the universe, it only makes sense that the powers of evil will never triumph over Him. Some of you have the English Standard Version of the Bible, and that gives you a very good translation when it says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." And that means the darkness will never ever, ever, ever, ever overcome it. It won't be able to defeat Jesus, even though it tries over and over and over and over and over again. It's been trying 2000 years, it hasn't done it. It could try 2000 more, it won't do it. Because when it says "the light shines" that's in the continuous tense in Greek, it means it shines and it keeps on shining. It burns and it keeps on burning even when the darkness keeps growing all around it. That's a pretty powerful thing to say here because that's the only time you see a present tense verb in this passage. Because as we've seen this morning, everything else in here is in the past tense. So if you look back in your Bibles, verse one says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." That means all that happened in the past. John writes this in such a way to tell you that it took place long ago. And then verse three says, "All things came into being through Him." And that's the same idea because it's describing what Jesus did previously. And then verse four says, "In Him was life, the life was the light of men." But now it says in verse five, "The light shines in the darkness," present tense, currently happening, which tells you that it's shining now. It's burning in this day and age in 2022 because all throughout history, the lesson has been clear, and that is that Jesus will defeat all His enemies, no matter who they are.

He will triumph over all the darkness no matter what that refers to. Because the term darkness here, it's left open ended. John doesn't actually define it, but it basically refers to anything that has stood against Jesus at any time throughout the eras. Like the false teachers we mentioned earlier. This could be a reference to them, because no matter how much men like Charles Taze Russell and Joseph Smith with the Mormons have tried to spread lies in the church, Jesus has overcome it. His true people can spot the error. And this can be a reference to all the political empires that have attacked God's people throughout the years, like the Roman Empire, because where are they today? Anybody meet a Roman

this week? No, they're gone. What about the Caesars? Same thing. We have Caesar salad, that's the best we can do. We had Little Caesars Pizza, it's not a big Caesar, it's a little Caesar. Christ triumphed over them. One author said there'll be a day when men will call their Lord, Jesus, they'll call their dog, Nero. This could be a reference to all the secular philosophies that are prevalent in our day and age. They seem so scary, like secular humanism, and atheism, and evolution, which says that Jesus did not create the world. All this happened by a freak act of nature. I mean, even though it's popular now, it won't be forever. One day Jesus will put a stop to all those things because His light can't stop shining. Even though people try, they can't do it. Even though they do the best to snuff it out, it won't work. It's not working in countries right now where Christianity is illegal, by the way. You can go to some of the Muslim countries around the world, some parts of China where Christians are getting arrested; the church is growing because He's just too powerful for that.

And what this means is that His light is available for you this morning. If you're in the darkness, and you want to come out of it, His power can bring you out if you'll just trust in Him and believe.

Closing remarks on this part of the chapter, the great scholar J C Ryle summed it up very well, and I can't do any better than to quote him here. Because he said that "When you look at John one, you can't close your sermon without expressing your deep feeling of inadequacy because you can't explain all this." He said, "I've labored to throw a little bit of light on the passage, but I feel like I haven't shed much in comparison to what it says. But what is revealed very clearly at the end, is that Jesus can save you, my friend. So why don't you believe in Him? He's enough to deliver you from your sins, so what is holding you back? There's nothing that should hold you back." And I can't think of a better way to start out our Christmas series than that. I mean, if you need the word of God, He's the Word of God. If you need a king, He's the King. If you need a saviour, He's the Saviour. If you need a light, He's the Light. And if you need someone to bring you out of darkness, He can bring you out of darkness. He's all that your soul needs to go to heaven. You don't need Jesus plus something else; it's Jesus plus nothing. And in fact, if you want to learn more about that this week, I would encourage you to go home after the service and sit down and read the rest of the Gospel of John. Because when you do that, you learn how Jesus came to save people from so many different backgrounds. He came to save a man like Nicodemus in John three, who was a Pharisee, and some believe he was on the Sanhedrin, the ruling council the Jews; he was the highest you could get in Jewish society. And then in John four, He comes to save the woman at the well. An adulterous, a Samaritan, the bottom of the barrel. He came to save the nobleman in the same chapter and later on He came to offer the gospel to the woman who was caught in adultery in John eight; and the blind man in John nine; and Mary and Martha and Lazarus in John 11. And as you see all of that, it can remind you, He can do the same thing for you. If He can save all those people, He won't leave you out. He'll bring you to heaven if you just repent, and call on His name.

Next week, we're going to continue our studies of the Gospel of John, when one of our elders Kevin Laser is going to walk you through the next part of this passage, when it says that Jesus was the true light which has come into the world. So please come back and join us for that. But for this week, I want to close with the words of a poem I found that was written by an anonymous author. To summarize what the Bible says about Christ. It's simply called the "Names of Christ." And it goes like this. It says

To the artist, He's the one altogether lovely.
To the builder, He's the cornerstone.
To the baker, He is the living bread.
To the biologists, He is the life.
To the architect, He's the sure foundation
To the doctor. He's the physician of souls.
To the farmer, He's the Lord of the harvest.
To the geologists. He's the Rock of Ages.
To the jurist, He's the judge.
To the lawyer, He's the counselor.
To the jeweler, He's the Pearl of Great Price.
To the philosopher, He's the wisdom of God
To the preacher, He's the word.
To the sculptor, He's the Living Stone
To the servant, He's the Master
To the statesman, He's the Desire of all nations;
But to the sinner, He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Which means if you're a sinner today, there really is one person that can offer you all these things, and that is Jesus Christ. Will you believe in Him this morning? Let me pray that you would. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, our hearts are full this morning, out of wonder and gratitude at the Saviour you have sent to save us. I know some people believe in religions that that are just left open ended. They can't get you to heaven. You go to heaven, wondering if you're really going to get there or not. They have to do works to save themselves. They have to keep rules. Father, we have a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who saved us completely, perfectly, fully. And so that when we go to heaven, there's no doubt in our minds will go there because of Him.

Thank You that You've sent us the Word of God. Thank You that He became flesh and dwelt among us. Thank you that when He did, He saved people from all these different walks of life to remind us He can penetrate our souls, and take the darkness away.

Lord, I pray for those who have heard this message today. For those who are saved, we always pray they would be encouraged and built up into things of faith. But those who are lost Lord, we pray they would find hope in the salvation of the cross. Lord, salvation is so simple, and yet it's so profound. God became man. And this time of the year is the best time of the year to talk about that, but it is a message that relates to all times of the year in each and every way. That Christ is our hope. We love Him, we worship, and we praise Him this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.