

**The Eternal Word**  
**Studies in the Gospel of John**  
**The Eternal Son of God**  
**John 1:1-18**  
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In my late teens I studied an A Level called “Elements of Engineering and Design.” One of the skills we had to develop was to draw three faces of an object: the front, the side and the plan (or top view). The idea behind technical diagrams like these is that you need more than one drawing to describe a complex object whether a metal casting or a house. In a similar way, we have four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible because more than one account is necessary to describe the glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You can’t capture Jesus in one written document!

Over the coming weeks we plan, God-willing, to turn to the last of the four Gospels, John’s Gospel. We’ve just finished a series of sermons on the life of Abraham from the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible, and now we’re turning to John’s Gospel which is in the second part of the Bible, the New Testament. We all need to hear “the whole counsel of God”, not just the NT, not just the OT, both Old and New.

John’s Gospel, let me say two words of introduction, is unique among the Gospels because John looks back on the events he records, and with God’s help, he sees the deeper meaning behind that event. Take for example the occasion when Jesus fed 5000 people with just five small loaves and two small fish. An amazing miracle, which all four Gospels record. But John can see beyond and behind the miracle; this miracle teaches us that Jesus came into the world to feed *hungry souls*, not just hungry *bodies*, Jesus is The Bread of Life, “Whoever feeds on him will live for ever,” John says. You can’t live, spiritually, without Jesus Christ, the Bread of life. God helps John to see further than the other three writers. So in some ways his Gospel is loftier, higher, grander than Matt, Mark, Luke. Secondly, John has chosen to record the miracles which will encourage the reader to believe in Jesus: “*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” (20:30-31). So our prayer over the months to come is that as we hear stories from John’s Gospel, our faith in Jesus will increase. If we don’t have faith at the start, God will give us that divine gift, and if we do have faith,

God will make it deeper and stronger.

This morning we're only going to consider the first 18 verses of the Gospel, where John introduces Jesus Christ to us in the most exalted way.

John doesn't start with the birth of Jesus in a humble manger, as Matthew and Luke do, he doesn't begin his story at the beginning of Jesus' three-year ministry, as Mark does, no John goes back before the beginning of time, because Jesus goes back to the beginning.

So our plan for this morning is this—let's go through these verses, called the Prologue, line by line, then let's draw out the main truths, then at the end let's consider together how the Holy Spirit may want us to respond to these words this morning.

### (1) The Verses one by One

Let's begin then by going through the verses one by one, I don't think there is any other way of teaching these verses, but I'll put all the verses up on the screen. Try to stay with me, but if you get lost, don't worry, we'll come up for breath soon enough.

- ***“In the beginning was the Word.”*** John deliberately starts his Gospel exactly the same way the Bible opens *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”* and introduces us to **“The Word.”** Whatever or whoever the Word is, it or he, existed before creation because he was with God when God made the earth.
- And look, *“the Word was **with** God.”* This “Word” was in some ways “separate” from God because he was “with” God.
- But! *“the Word **was** God.”* Ah! So here is God, and then beside God is the Word who is also God. God beside God!
- ***“He was with God in the beginning.”*** “He”, so now we know that this “Word” must be a person not an object or a force. So now we know that “The Word” is another name for a divine Person who was with God at the beginning of creation.

- And more – this Divine Word is the Creator of all things, look, “*Through him **all things were made**; without him nothing was made that has been made.*” The Word made the universe, absolutely everything, stars, planets, galaxies, trees, sky, animals, people.
- And then, out of the blue John introduces two new ideas, “life” and “light.” “*In him (that is the Word) was **life** and that **life** was the **light** of men.*” Life was in the Word and this life somehow became the light of men and women.
- Next we learn that there is darkness as well as this light, “*The light **shines in the darkness** but the darkness has not **understood it.***” The light of The Word is shining out into this darkness. The darkness must be rational because John says the darkness doesn't understand the light. But who are these beings who are in the darkness? Perhaps John will tell us in a moment.
- “*There came a man who was sent from God; his name was **John**. He came as a **witness to testify** concerning that light so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*” Some people apparently thought that John the Baptist was The Light, but no, says John, his role was to tell people about this true light.
- “*He (the Light) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the **world did not recognise him**. He came to **that which was his own**, but his own did not receive him.*” So now we know that The Light is a Person—“he” - who came into the world but was not recognised by the world—(even though he made the world!) And even his own people rejected him– that must be the Jewish nation.

Are you still with me? The Person called the Word, is also The Light. And He is shining all over the world, but the people of the world are in darkness and can't understand or recognise who he. Even his own people rejected him.

- “*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, not of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God.*” (verses 12-13) While lots of people reject this Light, many others, receive and believe in him. And these

people get to become God's children! If you receive The Light, if you believe in him, God will give you the right to become his son or daughter! How wonderful! But in case we think that all the credit for receiving is ours, John says, no, "people who acknowledge the light and receive Jesus, did so, not by their will-power but by God's mighty power, they were "born of God."

We're almost there...

- *"The Word became flesh and **made his dwelling among us**. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."* This divine Word, who is also the Light, became flesh, became a true human being like us. John must be talking about Bethlehem! And, he says, The Word is God's Son, it's all becoming clear. And we—that is the disciples who spent three years with him—saw the divine glory of the Word. God opened our eyes and we saw who Jesus really was. We also witnessed his passion for truth and grace. In a world full of lies he spoke the truth; in a harsh world of condemnation he was filled with mercy and forgiveness.
- *"John (Baptist) testifies concerning him. He cries out saying, "he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."* John the Baptist always regarded Jesus as greater than himself, because he knew that the Son of God existed before John was even born.
- *"From the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* (verses 16-17) At last **Jesus Christ is named!** - "The Word" "The Light" and "The Life" are all different names for Jesus Christ. The Old Testament given through Moses was all about law, but the New Testament, which came through Jesus is about grace and truth, it's about a God who lavishes one blessing after another upon us! (Sometimes people are fearful hearing about Jesus as if he will demand from them! No!)
- *"No-one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."* (verse 18) None of us have seen God but the only Son of God came into the world to show us what God is like.

The five truths John teaches are simple, though profound. The Word, The Light, The Life, are different titles for Jesus Christ, the Son of God—that's the key that unlocks these verses.

## **(2) The Five Truths**

### **1. The Son of God is Eternal**

He was there before anything else was created, he existed before time was born, so he is eternal.

### **2. The Son of God is God**

The Son of God is God, it says in verse 1, “was God.” In verse 3 it says that he made everything—only God made everything. So if the Word made the universe he must be God!

### **3. The Son of God became a man**

But the Son of God is also a real human being. “The Word became flesh.” Jesus Christ was both man and God, two natures in one Person.

### **4. The Son of God came to reveal God to us**

“No-one has ever seen God but the One and Only (the Son of God) has made him known.” That is also why he is called the Word.

Thoughts running through our minds are invisible and unknown to everyone around us until those thoughts turn into words. In the same way God is invisible—what is he like? Well through Jesus Christ, the Word of God, we discover exactly what God is like! Jesus reveals God!

### **5. The Son of God came to bless us**

And finally, the fifth doctrine, the Son of God came into this world to bless us: to shine through our terrible darkness, to make us his children, to fill our lives with grace and truth, and to pour on our unworthy heads “one blessing after another.” The Son of God came to bless us!

### (3) A Response is needed

How might we respond to these truths?

#### **(1) *The Lord wants us to grow in truth!***

The very fact that verses are not easy to grasp, tells us, that the Lord wants his people to go deep in knowledge, in truth, in understanding. The two highest mysteries of our faith, the Trinity and the two nature of Jesus Christ are here. We all start off in the shallows when we come to faith, but the Lord wants us to wade out into the deep, to use our minds, our intellects.

*“Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.” (1 Corinthians 14:20)*

*“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)*

Are you and I growing, advancing in our understanding of God and his ways? Or are we stuck where we were years ago? There are two spiritual conditions that impede our growth in doctrine.

The first is *backsliding*. One of the signs of backsliding—be on your guard—is that our interest, our passion for truth diminishes. *“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of Gods Word all over again.” (Hebrews 6)* Is there a prodigal among us, whom the Lord is calling back home? *“Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity... and God permitting we will do so...” (Hebrews 6:1)*

The second reason for paddling in the shadows is that we belong to a church or a denomination where truth is not prized, not loved, not esteemed. There are churches, sad to say, who do not love the truth enough.

I heard this week about a young man who went to a particular Bible College to learn to be a pastor. And it was all going well until he and his wife passed through a crisis—that’s the testing ground of truth, right? And they discovered that the shallow man-centred doctrine they had been learning at their Bible College could not support them

in the whelming flood, the anchor-chain snapped and they were left adrift. They went back to the Bible and discovered God-centred deep truth that would keep them in the deepest tests of life. In two weeks time this young man is becoming a church pastor. With deep doctrine he's ready now!

The Lord wants us to grow in depth!

## **2) *The Lord wants us to believe in Jesus Christ***

Why does John tell us who Jesus Christ is? The Word of God, the Light of God, the Life of God, the Creator, very God himself?

Because he wants you and I to believe in him and follow him all the days of our earthly lives.

Would you entrust your life your future your hope to a mere man, a mere mortal "who is like a breath; whose days are like a fleeting shadow." (Psalm 144:4)?

No, but you can entrust yourself to Jesus Christ, because he is a mighty Saviour, the divine Son of God, the Word, the Creator, the light, filled with truth and grace the giver of one blessing after another. Come to Jesus today! Receive him, believe in him, why delay? And if you do, then tell someone!

Perhaps you have come to Jesus but at the moment you are tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt; fightings within, and fears without. Well, can I remind you that we have a Saviour mighty to keep us in the darkest storms of life, who "saves to the uttermost" all those who come to God through them, a Saviour who loves you when you can't love yourself, and who prays for you when you can't pray for yourself.

Just a week ago Timothy Keller, a humble pastor from New York died after a three year battle with pancreatic cancer. He died well! Among his last words were "I can't wait to see Jesus" and "There is no downside to me leaving, not in the slightest." He was filled with bright hope in the face of death, because he trusted in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Creator, the Word of God, the Light of the World, the Life.

And so can you, and so can I.