

Who is Jesus?

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John. John chapter 1, and if we just read from the beginning, we'll read verse 1 and then we'll read verse 14.

John chapter 1 from the beginning. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And we're told in verse 14, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.

Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. You know, over the past few weeks since the Scottish government declared that face coverings are mandatory in shops and on public transport, I don't know about you, but for me it has become very difficult to recognize people.

Of course, as you know, it's such a strange experience to have to wear a face mask over your face all the time as you're in a shop or in public transport. And for me it can be, well, I personally find it very claustrophobic, and I get very hot, and my glasses start steaming up, and I can't really see where I'm going or what I'm doing.

But you know, what's made the shopping experience even more difficult is that you can't recognize people anymore when you're out shopping. You can't recognize other shoppers as easily because you can only see their eyes.

[1 : 32] And with my glasses steaming up, it's even harder to recognize people. In fact, I was in a shop the other day, and I kept looking at this person, thinking that it was someone I knew, and I was convinced it was someone I knew.

And although I couldn't see his face because of his face mask, I was convinced I knew this person to the point that I was going to go over and speak to him. But you know, when it actually came to it, I came round the island.

I came face to face with this person, two meters apart, of course. And with closer investigation, I realized that it wasn't the person I thought it was at all.

And it was quite embarrassing because I didn't have a clue who he was. And truth be told, I got his identity wrong. I didn't recognize him because his face was covered and his face was veiled with this mask.

And you know, in many ways, that's what the Gospel of John is all about. Because the Gospel of John is about making sure that we get the identity of Jesus right.

[2 : 36] Because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we'll misunderstand the Gospel, and we'll fail to see that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

But as the Gospel writer, John admits that it may be difficult for us to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, because he's veiled in human flesh.

It may be difficult for us to identify who Jesus really is, because no one has ever seen God, and no one has encountered God in human flesh.

But you know, the purpose of John's Gospel is to unveil and to reveal the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. But more than that, John not only wants us to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

In fact, in the epilogue, which is at the close of his Gospel, John explains why he writes this Gospel message. He explains why he has written this good news message about Jesus Christ.

[3 : 49] And John writes in chapter 20, he says, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

My friend, John wrote his Gospel with one passion and one purpose, so that you will believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. But of course, believing in Jesus Christ is not just about knowledge.

It's not just about knowing the facts about Jesus. It's not just intellectual assent. No, believing in Jesus for salvation is about receiving Jesus for salvation.

Because, you know, my friend, Christianity is not a cause to join or a code to follow. It's a Christ to receive.

Christianity is not a cause to join or a code to follow. It's a Christ to receive. And in order to receive Jesus Christ for salvation, you need contrition, confession, and commitment.

[5 : 03] You need contrition of sin, confession of the Son, and commitment to the Saviour. You need contrition, confession, and commitment.

But, you know, as we begin this study of John's Gospel, John's passion and purpose is to unveil for us and to reveal the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

And in the opening 18 verses, John gives to us what we've called his prologue or his foreword. And he introduces us to Jesus by showing us who he is.

And so as we consider the prologue of John's Gospel this morning, John wants us to be asking the question, Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? And John tells us.

He tells us that Jesus is God, Jesus is gracious, and Jesus is glorious. Who is Jesus? Jesus is God, Jesus is gracious, and Jesus is glorious.

[6 : 11] So first of all, Jesus is God. Jesus is God. He says in 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. The four Gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they all stand on the pages of Scripture as four eyewitness accounts that testify to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And you know, like any eyewitness account, the Gospel writers, they all present the same Jesus, but from different angles, which only emphasizes their authenticity, because if all four Gospel accounts, if they were all the same, if they were all imitations of one another, people would rightly think that the Gospels were the result of conspiracy or collusion.

But the fact that all four Gospel accounts present the same Jesus, but from different angles, it highlights to us their validity and the genuineness of their testimony.

In fact, that's what Lee Strobel came to discover in his case for Christ. Lee Strobel was an American journalist, and his story began back in the 1980s, where he was this American journalist, and he was also a self-confessed atheist.

[7 : 48] But when his wife became a Christian, Lee Strobel, he set out to disprove Christianity by exposing all the flaws that can be found in the Gospel accounts.

But what Lee Strobel actually discovered was that he couldn't disprove the Gospel accounts, nor could he disprove the Christ of Christianity. In fact, Lee Strobel became a Christian, and he has now written many books, and he continues to seek to explain and to defend Christianity.

You know, it's an amazing story, and I'd encourage you to read Lee Strobel's testimony. It's in a book called *The Case for Christ*. Or if you don't like reading, if you're not a good reader, you can watch the film.

The film is called *The Case for Christ*. And it'll remind you, it's a wonderful film, it'll remind you that all four Gospel writers, they present the same Jesus, but from different angles.

Because Matthew's Gospel, it presents to us the Gospel of the King. For Matthew, he wrote his Gospel from the angle that Jesus is the promised Messianic King, and with him the kingdom of God has arrived.

[9 : 07] But Mark, Mark's Gospel, is the Gospel of the suffering servant, because Mark wrote his Gospel from the perspective that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Then you have Luke's Gospel. Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of the perfect Son of Man. Because for Luke, he was himself a doctor, and he wrote his account in order to emphasise the humanity of Jesus, and that Jesus is the Son of Man who came to seek and to save the lost.

But for John, John's Gospel is the Gospel of the eternal Son of God. And when John begins his Gospel, as we read there, he doesn't begin at the ministry of Jesus like Mark does.

He doesn't begin with the birth of Jesus like Matthew does. He doesn't even begin with the prophecies of Jesus like Luke does. No, John, he brings us right back to the very beginning of time itself, and John reminds us that Jesus is not only the prophet, priest, and king.

He's not only the suffering servant. He's not only the Son of Man, but he's also the eternal Son of God. Because, you know, when John begins his Gospel with the phrase, in the beginning was the Word, you know immediately that John is echoing the opening phrase of our Bible in Genesis 1. [10:39] Because, you know, when our Bible introduces us to the one who has worked in creation and salvation, it does so with the words, in the beginning, God.

And, you know, I always find it remarkable that from those opening words in Genesis 1, we see that the Bible never tries to prove the existence of God. The Bible just asserts that God exists, and that God is there, and that God is real, and that God has acted in creation and salvation.

But, you know, by echoing the opening words of Genesis 1, John here, he wants to unveil and reveal the fact that Jesus was there in the beginning.

Jesus was there in the beginning. But as John makes clear, the Son of God wasn't there in the beginning as a man veiled in human flesh.

No, he was there in the beginning as the eternal Son of God. He was the Word. He was the Logos. And as the Word of God, John says, he was with God, and he was God.

[11:52] He wasn't created as the Son of God, and he wasn't inferior to God the Father, as the Jehovah Witnesses insist.

No, he is the Son of God. He's the Son of God who is equal to the Father and eternally begotten of the Father from before the foundation of the world.

And as John says in verse 2, he was in the beginning with God. He was in the beginning with God. And you know, I love that phrase because it literally means that in the beginning, Jesus was face to face with God the Father.

He was face to face with God the Father. It's a phrase that expresses the intimate and eternal relationship that exists between God the Father and God the Son.

That in the beginning, before the world began, in the beginning, God the Son was face to face with God the Father.

[13:00] And you know, this unique relationship that John highlights here between the Father and the Son, it's something that John repeatedly highlights throughout his Gospel.

He repeatedly says that Jesus and the Father are one. and as one, they have one passion and one purpose, the salvation of sinners.

But more than that, John says in verse 3, he says, 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. John says that in the beginning, the eternal word of God was God and was with God, but he was also actively working in creation as God.

because we're told that all things were made through him and without him there was not anything made that was made. Which means that in the beginning, way back in the beginning when God brought form into the formlessness of creation and fullness into the emptiness of the creation, we're told here that God the Son was actively playing his part in bringing this world into being.

[14:25] And you know, we can often be guilty of thinking that, well, God the Father is the creator, God the Son is the saviour and God the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. We can often be guilty of separating the roles of the Trinity in both creation and salvation.

But you know, what we must always remember is that the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity is actively working in both creation and salvation.

And what John is revealing and unveiling about Jesus here is that as God, he was with the Father at creation and all things were made through him.

Because when God the Father spoke into the void and darkness of this world, he spoke through God the Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

My friend, the triune God brought this world into being. And you know, that's the pattern we see repeated throughout Genesis 1. We see the pattern, and God said, let there be and it was.

[15:40] And God said, let there be and it was. And God said, that's God the Father, let there be light. light. That's the word that came forth from God the Son.

And by the power of the Holy Spirit we're told, and there was light. My friend, the creation was a Trinitarian act, but it was through him, through the word, that all things were made.

He was the vehicle, he was the means by which all things came into being. because as John affirms in verse 4, in him was life. And the life was the light of men.

And the light shined in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it. You know, what John's affirming to us here is that if it was true of Jesus that through him he brought life and light in creation, then John is saying it is true of Jesus that through him he will bring life and light in salvation.

And you know, my friend, it's a beautiful introduction to Jesus. Jesus is God. Jesus is God. And that's what John wants you to believe and receive.

[17:03] John wants you to have contrition of sin and confession of the Son and commitment to the Saviour because Jesus is God. Jesus is God.

And so as we begin John's Gospel, John wants us to be asking who is Jesus? And John says Jesus is God. Then he says secondly, Jesus is gracious.

Jesus is gracious. Now look at verse 6. He says, Now in these verses, the focus briefly shifts away from Jesus to John the Baptist who was, as you know, the forerunner to Jesus.

And that's what's actually affirmed here, that John was sent from God. He was apostello from God. He was literally an apostle from God.

He was God's sent one. And you know, what's remarkable is that John the Baptist was this figure who connected the Old Testament with the New Testament because as the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, he prepared the way of the Lord and we'll see more of this, God willing, next Lord's Day as we consider John the Baptist.

[18:33] He was, John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. He was the last of the foretellers. He was the last fourth teller before the Christ came. He was the last prophet who proclaimed that the Christ is coming and that sinners need to repent.

But you know, John was not only the last Old Testament prophet, he was also the first New Testament apostle because as we're told here, he was sent from God.

He was God's sent one. That's what the word apostle means. Sent one. And John was sent as we're told in verse 7, he was sent to be a witness.

He was sent to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. And then it says, he was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.

And you know, there's this emphasis, John puts this emphasis here that John the Baptist came to bear witness. That was the plan and purpose of God's sent ones.

[19:39] They were to bear witness. John the Baptist was to bear witness. He was to testify about the light. He was to give testimony to the light of Jesus Christ.

But you know, is that not what every Christian is to do us well. Because as Christians, we're to bear witness about the light.

As Christians, we're to testify to the light of the world, Jesus Christ. As Christians, we're to give testimony. We're to give testimony not about ourselves but about the one who gives life and light to dead and darkened souls.

We're to give testimony testimony about Jesus. My friend, we're not saved to promote or puff up or plug or post about ourselves. Because you know, the word proud, the word proud should never be in the vocabulary of the Christian.

Rather, we should adopt the character, conduct, and conversation of John the Baptist. Because John the Baptist says later in chapter 3, he must increase.

[20:54] and I must decrease. He must increase and I must decrease. That's how the Christian should live. That's the witness and testimony the Christian should give.

That should be the character, conduct, and conversation of a Christian. Not promoting or puffing up or plugging or posting about self but that he must increase and I, I must decrease.

But you know, the focus, the focus here, it briefly shifts away from Jesus to John the Baptist. Not only to introduce John the Baptist but also because there were questions over the identity of Jesus. And as we said, the Gospel of John is all about making sure that we get the identity of Jesus right. Because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong, we'll misunderstand the Gospel and we'll fail to see that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.

Which is why John says about John the Baptist and Jesus, he says in verse 8, he was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.

[22:03] The true light which gives light to 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.

As we said, God willing, we'll have a closer look at John the Baptist next week as there were questions about his identity because some thought that John the Baptist was the Christ. but what's interesting here is that conversely, some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist because they couldn't identify him correctly. And we see that throughout John's Gospel. We see it with the Pharisees, we see it with Nicodemus, we see it with the woman of Samaria, we see it with the crowds who follow Jesus. They all questioned the identity of Jesus which is why Jesus later asked the question to his disciples, who do you see or who do people say that I am? And the disciples, they confessed that there was confusion over the identity of Jesus because some claimed that he was John the Baptist, others said that he was Elijah, some said that he was Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

[23 : 13] And you remember that Jesus at that point, he turns the question on its head and he makes it more pointed and more personal by asking the disciples, who do you say that I am?

That's a question we should always take to ourselves. It's a question you should take to yourself. Jesus asking you today, who do you see that I am?

Because it was at that point that Peter stepped forward. He stepped forward with contrition, confession and commitment and he said to Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You know, there were questions over the identity of Jesus. But throughout John's Gospel, John is repeatedly asserting and affirming the identity of Jesus.

And John does this and we'll see it as we go through the Gospel. John does this by highlighting seven signs and seven sayings. Because there were seven signs and we'll see them.

[24 : 16] There were seven signs such as turning water into wine, that's the first sign. Then there was the feeding of the 5,000 and raising Lazarus from the dead. And there were also seven sayings of Jesus, the seven I am sayings of Jesus, such as I am the bread of life, I am the good shepherd, I am the light of the world, I am the way, the truth and the life.

And John used these seven signs and seven sayings of Jesus in order to reveal and unveil the identity of Jesus as the eternal Son of God.

But what John makes clear in verse 11 is that even though Jesus came to his own people and even though they saw the signs and they heard the sayings, John says they didn't receive him.

They rejected him. They ridiculed him. They refused him. They didn't receive Jesus by believing in Jesus. But as we've said, John wrote his gospel with one passion and one purpose so that sinners believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Because as we said, Christianity is not a cause to join or a code to follow. It's a Christ to receive. And in order to believe, you have to receive. You have to receive Jesus Christ by your contrition of sin, confession of the Son and commitment to the Saviour.

[25 : 42] And John says that even though his own people rejected Jesus, maybe you're like them today. Maybe you're someone who has spent their life rejecting Jesus.

I hope that as we begin John's gospel, you will not reject him anymore, but that you will believe and receive this Jesus Christ for salvation. Because in Jesus' day, there were many who rejected him. But there were others who received him. And when they received Jesus, and this is what you'll discover too, when they received Jesus, they discovered how gracious he really is.

Because John says in verse 12, 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, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

By believing and receiving, John says that Jesus graciously gives to sinners the privilege, the privilege to become God's children.

[26 : 56] And you become a child of God, my friend, not by the family you're brought up in, not by your own wants and desires, not by following rules or regulations, but by receiving Jesus Christ for salvation.

Christianity is not a cause to join or a cause to follow. It's a Christ to receive. It's a Christ to receive. And so as we begin John's Gospel, John wants us to be asking the question, who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? And John affirms to us, Jesus is God. Jesus is gracious. And then lastly he says, Jesus is glorious.

Jesus is glorious. Look at verse 14. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory, glorious of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness about him and cried out, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me, ranks before me, because he was before me. For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

[28 : 13] 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. We said earlier that the opening 18 verses, these opening 18 verses of John's Gospel, they give to us the prologue or the foreword of his Gospel.

And in the prologue, John introduces us to Jesus by showing us who Jesus is. But the prologue, it's also John's way of introducing to us themes.

Themes that are going to be repeatedly appearing throughout his Gospel. Because the identity of Jesus as the eternal Son of God is one such theme.

But so is the theme of Jesus as the Creator and his power over creation and healing the sick or walking on water. There's also the repeated theme of light and darkness.

[29 : 16] There's the theme of life and death. There's John's use of the word world. He uses the world in many different senses. There's also the concept of the new birth and the need to be born again.

And then there's the theme of grace. And lastly the theme of glory. And it's the theme of glory which John highlights in these concluding verses of his prologue.

Because John says that the word. The word who was in the beginning with God and the word who was God and the word through whom all things were made.

John says it was that word which became flesh and dwelt among us all so that we might behold his glory. Now when John says that the word became flesh, he's of course speaking about the incarnation of Jesus.

Jesus. Where the eternal son of God humbled himself by taking to himself our nature. But what's even more remarkable is that John says he dwelt among us.

[30 : 24] Literally he says he tabernacled among us. He tabernacled among us. And this immediately gives to us the imagery of the Old Testament sanctuary and the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Because for generations the Israelites they followed the laws and the commands that were given to Moses to worship God at the tabernacle and then later at the temple. And they were to worship God there because that's where God dwelt among his people.

But you'll remember that as a holy God dwelling in the midst of a sinful people God was separated from them. God was separated from them as he dwelt behind this thick curtain in this sanctuary called the Holy of Holies.

And as you know no one was allowed to approach their holy God without bloodshed and sacrifice. More so John says in verse 18 no one was allowed to see God face to face.

No one was allowed to look upon the glory of God in the tabernacle and in the temple. But here John says that the glory of the gospel is that God has now unveiled himself.

[31 : 42] God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. And as sinners we're not only able to approach God because of the bloodshed and sacrifice of Jesus Christ but we're also invited to come and we're able to see God face to face in the gospel.

We're able to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And you know my friend I don't think we appreciate the magnitude of this because for a first century Jew reading the prologue to John's gospel it would have been mind-blowing.

It would have absolutely blown their mind to hear that God this God who dwelt veiled inside the tabernacle for centuries.

He has now revealed himself and made himself known and even made himself approachable. He has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh but more than that my friend the Jews they longed to see the glory of God.

They longed to see the glory of God dwell among them again. And this is an important point that John is picking up on. Because when the city of Jerusalem was invaded by the Babylonians way back in 586 BC you'll remember the temple was destroyed.

[33 : 09] The city was destroyed. The glory of God which had dwelt among the Israelites for centuries it departed. And the Israelites they were sent into exile in Babylon.

And even though nearly a hundred years later after returning from exile in Babylon and restoring the city of Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple the thing was the glory of God never returned to the temple.

The holy of holies lay empty. The Israelites you could say they became Ichabod. The glory had departed. But the prophet Haggai he gave to them a glimmer of hope when he prophesied that the glory of the latter temple would be greater than the glory of the former temple.

But the prophecy wasn't about the place of worship. The prophecy wasn't about the temple. The prophecy wasn't about the place of worship but a person to worship.

Because what John says is that the glory of the latter temple has now been revealed and unveiled in the person of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 22] And John says we have seen his glory. We have seen his glory. The glory is of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

Full of steadfast love and faithfulness. And John says he says in verse 16 for from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

for the law was given through Moses but grace and truth has come through Jesus Christ. Oh my friend who is Jesus?

Jesus is God. Jesus is gracious. And Jesus is glorious. And this gospel was written and has been preserved throughout the centuries so that today, today you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

My friend, believing in Jesus Christ for salvation is about receiving Jesus Christ for salvation. salvation. Christianity is not a cause to join or a code to follow.

[35 : 41] It's a Christ to receive. And in order to receive Jesus Christ for salvation, you need contrition of sin, confession of the Son and commitment to the Saviour.

My friend, who is Jesus? Jesus is God. Jesus is gracious. Jesus is glorious. But my friend, is Jesus your Saviour?

Is Jesus your Saviour? You make sure he is by believing and receiving him for salvation.

But may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, may we give thanks to thee for the glory of the gospel that we see in the pages of Scripture.

We see the glory of Jesus Christ. We thank thee, Lord, that he is the word and that he is the word who became flesh and dwelt among us, that he became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in order to live the life we should have lived.

[36 : 55] And to die the death we deserve to die. We thank thee, Lord, that in the gospel we are able to behold his glory. And it is the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And Lord, help us then, we pray, to know his grace and to follow his truth, to see that he is the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And that no man comes to the Father except through him.

Lord, bless us then, we pray. Bless the gospel to us, that it would reach deep into our soul, that we would know Jesus, not only intellectually, but that we would know him personally.

We would know him as a personal saviour. Oh, do us good, then we pray. Lead us and guide us by thy truth. And lead us, Lord, into the week that lies ahead. go before us, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing in the words of Psalm 98.

Psalm 98, and it's from the Scottish Psalter, and we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4.

[38 : 07] In Psalm 98, it's a psalm which calls us to sing, to sing a new song to the Lord for the wonders that he has done. And this psalm, it's looking forward to the incarnation.

It's looking forward to the arrival of Jesus Christ. And the psalm reminds us that this Jesus is the one who will win the victory.

He's the one who will make salvation known. And he appears, says the psalmist, he appears because the Father has been mindful of his grace and truth.

And that's what John says to us here. It says in Psalm 98 at verse 3, He mindful of his grace and truth to Israel's house hath been and the salvation of our God all ends of the earth have seen.

And that's fulfilled in what John says, that the word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, full of steadfast love and faithfulness.

[39 : 13] So friends, let's sing that new song to the Lord for wonders he hath done. Psalm 98 from the beginning down to the verse marked 4 to God's praise.

O sing the new song to the Lord for wonders he hath done for wonders he hath done his right hand his right hand and his holy arm in victory and won in victory and won in victory and won the Lord the Lord for his salvation a cause and to be known a cause and to be known his justice in the region inside he openly has shown he openly has shown he openly has shown he mindful of his grace and truth to Israel's hearts have been to Israel's hearts have been and the salvation of our God
O end of the earth at sea O end of the earth at sea O end of the earth at sea Let all the earth come to the Lord Send forth that joyful noise send forth that joyful noise Lift up your voice how loud to him Sing praises and rejoice Sing praises and rejoice come the singing singried in the