

## **John 1:1-5, 9-18, A New Beginning**

### **Intro**

Let's play a quick game of 'who am I?'

Clue 1: (100points) This person was born in London, during the time of 'The Troubles', the name given to the violence between Republican Irish against the historic occupation of N.I. by Britain.

Clue 2: (75 points) After a short time in London this person was brought up first on the south coast near Hastings then in Kent.

Clue 3: (50 points) A work ethic for being employed was instilled in him and he began work while still at school, first for a hardware & ironmongers working Saturdays, later adding two evenings as a waiter and then eventually going into full-time work as an apprentice to a Civil Engineering Infrastructure Contractor after leaving school.

Final Clue: (25 points) After a career of 28-years in that industry he took up a full-time vocation instead, requiring 6-years of training.

If I were to go and preach at another church none of that 'who am I' quiz would have been used but a simple introduction to say that I am the Pastor of Lindsay Park Baptist Church.

### **Why does John not give a more direct introduction not Jesus?**

John was introducing someone who was literally world-changing, a new revelation to the world whose life split history in two.

John starts with an ancient promise of God, stirring the imagination of the listener to say he is not introducing an ordinary man, not even someone who was a prophet who was given a revelation about God and the people. No, John engages our imaginations, leaning into scriptures to say he is introducing the one and only original speaker and creator of all life.

John does not give a more direct introduction because he wants to introduce us to this greater depth and life-changing impact.

### **The Word**

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

<sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning.

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As Eugene Peterson puts it, 'When God speaks, things happen. Holy Scripture opens with the Genesis words "God said."' <sup>i</sup>

We now know The Word is also a 'He', a male person, but no other name is yet used. John's introduction is giving us great depth about the person he describes. The word was with God (2-persons and the Word was God (2 in 1 person)).

<sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

This person called the Word is the voice that speaks creation into being, with a special crowning of creation described as the life and light of all people - meaning understanding, cognitive ability to plan, reason and create.

### **The Light**

Historians used to name the "'Dark Ages" [as] a term for the Early Middle Ages (roughly 5th-10th centuries) in Western Europe, often associated with a period of economic, intellectual, and cultural decline following the fall of the Western Roman Empire...'

I think our historians were not thinking wide enough. The dark ages better describe humanity from the time of The Fall when Adam & Eve rejected God, trying to be God themselves at the encouragement of Satan, all the way through to when The Word appeared on Earth.

'...However, modern historians often prefer to discuss the Early Middle Ages rather than using the pejorative term "Dark Ages"' <sup>ii</sup>

Yes, that's better but I wonder if there is an unintended subtext to fit our modern culture that sees itself as enlightened and better informed? We may have advanced in technology but without the creative Word of light and life that John describes, the world remains in darkness.

Yet, there is hope though for what John said then remains true today,

<sup>5</sup>'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' (NIV)

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### **Take Care!**

The hope rings out like a tuneful bell,

<sup>12</sup>'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.' (NIV)

But take care. John's mirroring of God's creative voice from Genesis before giving the more familiar name to this person is also a warning.

The warning is to take care that we don't force our pre-conceived ideas about God onto this person that John describes but start from God's own introduction in his Word.

### **God's Introduction**

Back then, way back then the persons of 'God created the heavens and the earth. Now, the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep *and* the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.' (Gen.1:1-2 NIV)

Right at the beginning there was God creator and his Spirit hovering over what was being created. God and Spirit, pre-existent, uncreated jointly in the joyful act of creating something new.

There was no model for this. No rough sketches developed into technical drawings. No applications to a planning committee for more tweaks before an agreed final version, but creativity in motion according to the design held by God alone.

'And God said...' eight times, with the eighth saying, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they might rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' (Gen.1:26 NIV)

The singular and yet plural nature of God is revealed, as is the crowning glory given to mankind of the delegated and creative role to look after all that is created.

It is a story full of life and healthy, close relationship. God is relational, He is life, and He entrusted mankind to a life of loving relationship.

What a beautiful picture!

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And yet, sometime later is became spoiled as Adam and Eve disobeyed. They used to receive the Lord God as he came to walk with them 'in the garden in the cool of the day' (Gen.3:8 NIV) but after their disobedience of a desire to be like God they now hid from the Lord; they did not receive Him.

As John mirrors it about The Word, Light and Life whom he introduces,

'He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.'  
(John 1:11 NIV)

History has repeated itself! The relational God of love desires this with his people, whom he set as caretakers over all that is created but is spurned. The relationship between God and mankind is fractured.

### **One and Only Son**

However, there is an everlasting relationship, full of hope and love in the person John describes.

He says this,

<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The phrase, 'one and only Son' again mirrors the language of God. Last time he said it he was speaking to Abraham, who after 100 years had finally received a precious gift of son through his wife Sarah. Abraham needed no reminding about how precious this son was to him and both he and Sarah had probably doted on the boy as he grew, yet God said to him, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac...' (Gen.22:2 NIV)

John uses the phrase of 'one and only Son' twice to emphasise this point,

<sup>14</sup>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. (NIV)

This is a revelation of good news says John for,

<sup>16</sup>Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (NIV)

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As in the garden, where the Lord sought out Adam and Eve, even though they hid instead of receiving Him, history is repeated here too!

He, who has the closest relationship with the Father offers close relationship to us, replacing the lies of disobedience with truth. The truth that He never abandoned us but that we hid.

It's not a legal contract he seeks but a relational one. He models relationship in Father Son and Spirit. He loves to be received and a right response to him brings with it motivation to keep in right relationship, not through legal compliance but through the mirroring of close relationship.

**Action**

So, finally John uses the name to which we are more familiar, Jesus Christ, as being The Word, Life, Light and Son.

John has given us an imagination-gripping introduction to who God is and who Jesus is using God's own words and the creative imagery implanted in mankind.

‘to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – <sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.’ (John 1:12-13 NIV).

God's desire is to be received and welcomed by his people today. We get to become his children – we get to enter into the family of The Word, Life and Light; mirroring the relationship described between the Son and the Father.

So much love and depth in John's introduction! In this moment let us all welcome and receive Jesus, the 'Son who is himself God and in the closest relationship with the Father' (John 1:18 NIV) submitting to him as his children.

amen

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<sup>i</sup> Eugene Peterson, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire: A Conversation on the Ways of God Formed by the Words of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2018), p.321.

<sup>ii</sup> See, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark\\_Ages\\_\(historiography\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Ages_(historiography))