

# OpenTheo

## John's Prologue (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In John's Prologue (Part 1), Steve Gregg delves into the Gospel of John to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' life. Gregg explains that John refers to Jesus as the Word, which existed before creation and made all things. While there is no biblical evidence to support the concept of Jesus being the eternal Son of God prior to his birth in Bethlehem, the doctrine of the Trinity may imply a close relationship between the Father and the Son. Ultimately, Gregg asserts that believing in Jesus as the Word made flesh is the key to becoming children of God.

### **Transcript**

Today we begin our studies in the Gospels going through the life of Christ in a summarizing fashion. Summarizing the... I shouldn't say summarizing, but I should say harmonizing. That's really what we want to say, not summarizing.

We don't want to summarize it all. We want to take every detail. And we're going to take each of the events of the life of Christ and do what we can to see everything that we're told about those events in each of the Gospels.

Of course, there are many events in the life of Christ where several Gospels report what was done. And there are other events in the life of Christ where only one or two Gospels will record it. John's Gospel would seem to be the logical place to start in our inquiry of the Gospel records of the life of Christ because John goes back further than any other Gospel.

Now, the birth stories of Jesus are not found in John. None of them are. There's no birth stories of Jesus in John.

They are found in Matthew and in Luke. But John goes back prior to the birth of Jesus and therefore starts chronologically earlier. And he does make reference to Jesus coming to earth, which obviously is an allusion to his birth, although he doesn't really give us any of the details about it.

He just states the phenomenon of the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us.

The first 18 verses of John's Gospel are usually referred to as the prologue of John's Gospel. It's at verse 19 that the story really begins to be told about Jesus.

Prior to that, it's more of a theological interpretation of the life of Christ, which John begins his Gospel with. It doesn't really deal with any specific events so much as the transcendent concept of Jesus as God, who he was before he arrived here, and who he was when he was on the earth, and, of course, who he continues to be now. I'd like to read the first 18 verses, though commenting on them will take us probably more than this one session.

So, we'll read the whole passage since it is a unit, and then we'll comment on as many verses as we have time to today. 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 nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of the light.

That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 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 his own did not receive him.

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, 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 beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of him and cried out, saying, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me.

And of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. And then begins the story of John, the testimony of John. And as you read on in this chapter, you find that John is testifying publicly about an event which had occurred previously, namely the baptism of Jesus when the dove came down upon him, the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove.

John says, I saw that, I can testify that he is the Son of God. Obviously, the story picks up at verse 19 sometime after the baptism of Jesus, because John is reflecting back on that

event in his testimony. It would also, of course, pick up after his temptation, because the other three Gospels tell us that as soon as Jesus was baptized, he went into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days, and so John 1.19 must pick up even after that.

And that is, I think, a fair assumption. We won't deal with those verses yet. We have a long way to go before we can get there.

But verses 1-18 obviously do not deal so much with a particular event of Jesus' life, but the life as a whole, the life as a concept. In fact, when we talk about the life of Christ, we're using the word life differently than we use it when we speak of the life of Caesar, or the life of this or that historical person. Because when we talk about the life of anyone else, we're really talking about a period of history.

We're really talking about events that occurred, the person's birth, his childhood, his adulthood, his death. That's what we call his life, the brief number of years that he was upon the face of the earth. But when we talk about the life of Jesus, we're talking about something far more transcendent.

In him was life, it says, and his life was the light of men. And there is the strong suggestion that that life was in the world, and that light was in the world even before the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, even before Jesus came to earth. In fact, that life and that light, which is identified with the word, was God, and existed in the beginning with God, prior to the creation of anything.

In fact, was instrumental in the creation of everything. Therefore, John is really tracing the life of Christ back to God himself, and back to pre-creation. This is a, we could call it, suprahistorical account of the life of Christ.

That means it transcends history, and it has more to do with the essence of what we mean when we talk about the life of Christ. The life was a light. The life was this word, a living word.

Now, this concept of the word is where we must begin, because that's essentially where John begins. In the beginning was the word. The expression here, translated word, is the Greek term *logos*, and *logos* means word.

Word is a very good translation of it. It has a somewhat broader meaning than our English word does, because *logos* is also the root of the word logic in English. It's also a part of words like biology, and psychology, and any other word that ends with ology.

There are a great number of words in our language that end with ology. And ology is always an anglicized twisting of the word *logos* at the root of the word. *Logos*, in that case, would mean the study of something.

Psychology would be the study of the psyche, or the soul. The Greek word for soul is

psyche. So, psychology comes from psyche and logos, a word about the soul, or the study of the soul.

So, the word logos has somewhat of a broader meaning than our English term word, although word is still the best translation if we would try to find a single term to translate the word logos. It's the best we can do, and it is appropriate in view of what John's building upon. Now, it has been pointed out that some earlier Greek philosophers, even six centuries before Christ, had spoken in terms of the word as sort of the great universal mind, the great universal first cause, that everything was created by the word, which in the thinking of the Greeks was not at all like John's thinking, although he no doubt picked the term deliberately.

The writers of scripture sometimes would use terminology that was well known in the pagan world and give it a new spin, a new twist. In the thinking of many of the Greeks, perhaps not all of them, but at least some Greek philosophers dating back as far as six centuries before Christ, the logos, the word, was the first cause of everything. It was not probably, in the mind of the Greeks, thought of as a personal entity, like we think of God as a personal entity, but more of the eternal reason, the eternal wisdom, or the eternal mind.

Perhaps very much like what the New Age people today think of as the universal mind in the universe. Not entirely personal, like we think of God being personal, but somehow intelligent anyway, and behind everything and through everything and in everything. Now, John obviously is not thinking of the expression that way, although he may have deliberately chosen the term logos to appeal to a Greek readership and to find a, we could call it an interest bridge for evangelism.

The Greeks did have this concept that the word was the source of everything, but they did not, as John did, associate the word with Jesus Christ, nor did they associate the word with God. And John puts that new angle on it. It's true, he says, the word was the source of everything.

The word was the author of creation. But what you need to understand is that the word was a living person. The word was a personal being.

And John calls the word he, he and him throughout this passage, which is the innovation that John brings to the subject. Now, in addition to the Greek background for the use of the word logos here, of course John is probably even more influenced by the Hebrew background of it. When he says that all things were made through the word, and without the word nothing was made that was made, he's no doubt going back as far as Genesis chapter 1. In fact, it can be no accident that he opens his gospel with the exact words that are found at the opening of the Bible itself.

In Genesis 1.1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. John mimics the

opening lines of Genesis and says, in the beginning. And of course he's about to say the same thing Genesis says.

He's going to talk about the creation. But instead of just saying God created, he wants to introduce the agency through which God created in the beginning. In the beginning there was this entity called the word, this person really.

And it was through the word that all things were made. He could have deduced that from Genesis itself. Anyone who reads Genesis chapter 1 can see quite plainly that even though the spirit of God hovered over the faces of the waters, of the deep, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the world was formless and void, even with the presence of the Holy Spirit there, nothing changed.

Until the word was introduced. And God said something. And when God spoke, his word had creative force.

Usually referred in theology to the creative fiat of God. It has nothing to do with the kind of car that God drives. A fiat is a command that issues a reality into existence.

And the creative fiat of God was God speaking and saying, let it be, and it was. He said, let there be light. And every time some new progress was made throughout Genesis chapter 1, it was the result of God speaking something new.

And therefore, even without any recourse to the Greek thought, John could have come up with this insight that everything was made through the word, because although the expression word isn't found in Genesis chapter 1, we see the word as the creative force as God speaks. When he speaks, things happen. God did not create anything without speaking.

In other words, he didn't create anything silently without words. It was his word that had the power and was the agency of his creation. Now, John even could appeal to something more recent than Genesis as the basis for what he was saying here.

If you'll turn to Psalm 33. Psalm 33, in verse 6, says, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. And down in verse 9, For he spoke, and it was done.

He commanded, and it stood fast. Now, of course, the psalmist is probably using nothing as his source but Genesis when he says, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. And the psalmist is just really stating what anyone might have stated having read Genesis chapter 1, but the words of the psalmist come closer to John's words because the psalmist specifically mentions the word as the creative agent in the creation of the heavens and the earth.

In Genesis, it simply says, God said, and God said, and God said. But in Psalms, it

identifies the word as the agency by which God brought it into being. It's just restating what Genesis says, but restating it in terms that give John a precedent for saying, Through the word, everything was made.

But John goes further than the psalmist does by saying, The word was a heed. Unlike you and I, our words are simply sounds. Just interruptions in the tranquility of the atmosphere.

They're just waves where our vocal cords, you know, they vibrate and they send off a wave pattern that is audible to the apparatus we call ears of other people and of ourselves. But our words are really nothing more than just sounds. Now, it's amazing how much can be done with the power of even human words.

Life and death, in a sense, can be in the power of the tongue, the Bible says. And the words of a king can be very, very effectively potent in affecting the lives of people. The words of anyone in authority, or even the words of anyone telling lies, deceptive words, can change the whole course of your life or of history.

But still, those words are nothing more than sounds. But when we speak of God's word, John is suggesting to us, when God speaks, it's not just so much noise. It's not just so much sound.

His word is actually personal. His word is a person and can rightly be referred to as He. Now, we usually think of, when we describe the Trinity, we usually think of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as being the Trinity in its pre-existent existence.

Pre-existent existence, how should I say it? Pre-historic existence, prior to the advent of history, that Jesus was the Son and there was the Father and the Holy Spirit. I'm not sure whether that description would have been used by John. He didn't use it.

He spoke of Jesus not as the Son back in those days, but as the Word. Now, the question of whether Jesus was properly referred to as the Son prior to His birth in Bethlehem is one that has been debated in church history. Of course, the view that Jesus has eternally been the Son of God is the view that ascended over alternative views in history and has become known as orthodoxy and it was incorporated into our orthodox descriptions of the Trinity.

But, and be that as it may, one fact remains true. Jesus is never referred to as the Son in any context that refers to something prior to His birth. He is referred to as God and as the Word.

But you will never find in the Bible a place, neither in the Old nor the New Testament, which referring to Jesus in His time prior to His birth in Bethlehem, where He is called the Son. There are a few Old Testament passages where He is called the Son, as, for example, in Psalm 2, where it speaks, where God says, You are my Son, this day I have

begotten you. Psalm 2, 7. However, the time frame of that reference is the resurrection of Jesus, according to Paul, who quotes that verse, and New Testament writers quote it elsewhere, too, and they always apply it to having its fulfillment in the lifetime, more specifically in the resurrection of Jesus, being the firstborn from the dead.

There is not a suggestion in Psalm 2 of a preexistent sonship, nor in Isaiah 9, 6, which is sometimes quoted, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. His sonship is affirmed after the reference to His birth. The child is born, and then at the cross, the son is given.

But to say that He was called the Son of God prior to His birth in Bethlehem is simply to say something that is extra-biblical. It may be true, but we don't have any biblical statements that would affirm it. Now, I'm not trying to deny that Jesus was the Son beforehand, but we can say this, He was the Word, and that is the term that the biblical writer prefers to use of Jesus in His preexistent state.

No biblical writer refers to Him as the Son in His preexistent state. And, by the way, this fact, I'm sure Phil, when he was talking about knowing God, probably raised the various opinions that exist on this very point. But the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, like to nail Christians down on this because they oppose the Trinity.

The JWs oppose the Trinity doctrine and the deity of Christ. And since Christians have historically said that Jesus was begotten, not made, in eternity past, and was always eternally the Son of God, the JWs have raised the philosophical problem of, well, how did He become a son without ever beginning? What is it that makes one person the son of another person, but that one has begotten another? And that act of beginning must be an actual occurrence, and if it's an actual occurrence, it must have happened in some time frame chronologically. There must have been a time prior to its occurrence and a time after its occurrence.

And therefore they say, whether you say that Jesus was created or begotten, you still must be speaking of Him as having a beginning, else how does one come into relationship with another party being son and father? Now, I wrestled with that myself for a long time with the Jehovah's Witnesses because I believe firmly that Jesus was God and is God, that Jesus had no beginning, and that Jesus was not made, was not created. But when I gave them the standard lines about, well, He was begotten, not made, they did press me to the wall on this point. This is when I was much younger.

I don't have any problems with it anymore. But when I was much younger, they'd have me nailed to the wall saying, well, you know, you say He was begotten, but that still speaks of a beginning. And my problem was that I was trying to affirm a concept that is not stated in the Bible, namely that Jesus was somehow begotten prior to His birth in Bethlehem, prior to His conception in the womb of Mary, that Jesus somehow held the status of Son of God prior to His being born of God in Bethlehem.

And while that is orthodoxy as it is defined by modern Protestantism, and for the past many hundreds of years, it's considered to be orthodoxy, unfortunately, there's no statement in the Bible to support it. And I don't mind supporting what the Bible says in the face of critics who say, but that's not logical. If the Bible says it, I say, I don't care if it's logical.

If God said it's true, I will affirm it, and I'll be a fool for Christ. If that makes me look to be a fool, if I say something you think is illogical, God said it, I believe it, that settles it. You can say all you want about me being a fool, but I'll just take my blows about that for Jesus' sake, you know.

But if it's not in the Bible, I'd just as soon not take such blows. I'd rather not stand for that which is illogical if there's no biblical reason to do so. And the Bible does affirm that Jesus had no beginning in Micah 5.2, which says, Out of you Bethlehem shall come forth to me, the King who is to be the ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting.

It is orthodoxy to say Jesus had no beginning, and I agree with that orthodoxy. The question is, in His pre-existence, what was His status and His relationship to the Father? Most say He was the Son, the Eternal Son. The Bible does not say that.

But the Bible does say He was the Word of God, which somehow even makes Him more united with God than to call Him a Son, it seems to me. It seems like the union between a person and His own Word is a greater union, a greater identification than that between a Father and a Son, as close as that may in fact be. Now, I certainly have no axe to grind about this matter of the Eternal Sonship of Jesus.

I just would have you informed that if you're going to go to the mat over that issue in debate with Jehovah's Witnesses or anyone else, you might as well be apprised of where your scriptural case lies. You don't have a scriptural case for saying that Jesus was the Eternal Son, as near as I can tell. But you do have a case for saying He was God, and that's even more important, since the Bible affirms that.

Of course Jesus was the Son of God throughout His lifetime, and the Bible affirms that in many, many dozens of places, probably scores of places. But prior to that, we have no evidence that He was the Son. But He certainly was the Word, and that's the word that is used.

Notice, for example, if you turn over to John's other writings on this subject, in 1 John chapter 1, John's epistle actually begins almost like his gospel does. 1 John 1.1 and the gospel of John 1.1 have very close affinities. Whereas John 1.1 says, In the beginning was the Word, 1 John 1 starts this way, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life.



The life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us. Now, obviously he's talking about his personal contact with Jesus. But he refers to Jesus as that which was from the beginning.

That's what he says about Jesus in the opening of the gospel. He also says, the Word of life. Now, in John 1, it says, In the beginning was the Word, and in Him was life.

And that life was the light of men. So, the identification of the expression Word, and life, and light, in John, these things are all to be identified with one entity, one person, who, when he came to earth, was known as Jesus. Now, in 1 John 5, we have a verse that probably is not authentic.

The King James and the New King James have this verse, but all other versions do not because it's highly questionable as far as its authenticity. The better Greek manuscripts have never contained this verse. But, nonetheless, some have felt it's authentic, so I might as well just point to it.

1 John 5, 7 says, For there are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. Now, if that is an authentic verse, it clearly is a very good statement about the Trinity. And it is the only statement of the Trinity in the Bible.

I believe in the Trinity, but I believe the Trinity doctrine is a deduction that we are compelled to by taking seriously all the biblical material. But there is no place in the Bible, other than here, that could be said to teach the Trinity outright. And, sadly, for those of us who believe in the Trinity, the verse which most clearly teaches the Trinity is not found in most of what are considered to be the best manuscripts.

And, therefore, it is believed that some copyist, some interpolator, added this verse at a time much later than John's own time, and that he didn't really write it. But, whether it's authentic or not, notice, with interest, how it describes the Trinity. It does not say there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

Now, whether John wrote that himself, or whether it was some forger trying to copy John's style, the person copying John's style, nonetheless, saw that John would tend to use that expression for Jesus, the Word. Now, I'm not trying to make a case for this being an authentic verse or not. In fact, I suspect it's not.

But no one knows for sure. And some believe that it is authentic. But what I would point out to you is that in 1 John, as well as in the Gospel of John, one of the first things that John says about Jesus is that he existed from the beginning, and he was the Word.

Now, look also at one other thing that John wrote. In Revelation chapter 19. Revelation

19, verses 11 and 12.

Same author. It says, We'll take one more verse. Now, this passage, along with the others in John's writings, is one of the factors that leads me to believe that John actually wrote the book of Revelation prior to writing his other books.

No one knows for sure when any of John's books were written, as far as the exact years, nor in what order. Many believe Revelation was the last book written, but there's no compelling reason to believe so. John could have written his Gospel and Epistles after he wrote Revelation, and in my opinion, he did, because if John had already written the Gospel of John, where he identified Jesus as the Word, it would seem almost coincidental that later, when he saw a vision from heaven, it was revealed to him that Jesus was the Word.

It seems more likely that he got this revelation while on Patmos, that Jesus' name is called the Word of God. And then later, when he wrote his Gospel and his Epistles, he incorporated that insight into his discussion of who Jesus really was. Otherwise, we'd have to say that John got the Revelation twice.

He got it before he wrote, that is, about Jesus being the Word. Then he got it before he wrote the Gospel of John. Then he got it independently or again when he was on the island of Patmos.

That could be the case, but I'm of the opinion that John got this insight about Jesus being the Word of God when he was on Patmos. In Revelation 19.13. And later, as he wrote the life of Christ and his Epistles, he incorporated what he had learned on that occasion about Jesus being the Word. No doubt, he'd had time to think about that more, too, and think, well, what does that imply? Well, come to think of it, the Word of God goes all the way back to the creation narrative.

And even before, God certainly has never been divorced from his own reason, from his own logic, from his own thinking, from his own expression of himself. The Word is God. And this we take to be absolutely true.

John got this revelation from God himself, from Jesus himself. Now, getting back to the Gospel of John, then. John has this awareness of Jesus in his prior existence being the Word of God.

Whether it is also proper to speak of him at that time as the Son of God, you are entitled to believe one way or another since the Bible is silent on that question. But as far as him being the Word of God, there is no question on that, so we'll proceed with that understanding. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God, John 1, 1 says.

Now, here we run into a logical problem right away. Now, on this one, I don't mind going to the mat with the Jehovah's Witnesses when they say, you can't have it both ways. He

can't be God and with God at the same time.

And I say, yes, he can, because the Bible says so. Do I understand that? Well, not exactly. Far from it.

But it says that, at least. And I'm certainly willing to be a fool for Christ if that's what it makes me look to be for standing up for what the Bible says. Now, the Jehovah's Witnesses have eased the burden of accepting this verse by retranslating it.

And what they've done, you may already be aware of this, they read it this way, that the Word was with God, and then instead of saying the Word was God, they say the Word was a God or something like that. They add the indefinite article a before God. The Word was a God.

Yes. Oh, absolutely. In fact, they defend their act of doing so.

Here's how they defend it. They say that the word theos, which is Greek for God, when it is speaking of the true God, Jehovah, is preceded by the definite article ho, ho, H-O in the Greek, which means the. A definite article is the word the.

An indefinite article is the word a or an, all right? In case you don't know any English. Now, got to know a little English before you can explain Greek. That the word theos and along with most nouns are masculine nouns like theos is masculine in the Greek.

In Greek, if you do not have the definite article before the noun, the proper translation often is a something. You know, in the Greek language, there is no word for the indefinite article. There's no word for a or an.

It is implied whenever there's not a definite article. So, if you want to talk about the word, halagos. Ha is the.

Lagos is word. If you just said lagos, it could mean a word. It could mean word or a word.

It could mean either way. But there's no other way to say a word than just to say lagos. Likewise with theos, which means God.

You can say hatheos, the God, or you can, if you say theos, it either means God or it means a God. In this particular case, where it says the word was God, it just says the word was theos, which in some circumstances could be translated a God. The problem here, of course, is it depends on more than just simple Greek grammar.

There have been book-length treatments of this verse. I have a book-length treatment. It was a guy's doctoral dissertation on this very verse.

Actually, the book is called the Jehovah's Witness New Testament. It deals with their translation of this verse and talks about all these obscure Greek grammar rules and so

forth, which I must confess went over my head. I think I understood them at the time I read it, but I didn't remember them after I finished reading it.

Just a very complex discussion showing that the Jehovah's Witnesses are neglecting some very important and universally known Greek grammar rules when they say this should be translated a God. Grammar aside, we know this, that the word theos can mean God. It doesn't always have to mean a God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are not correct about this. They say that whenever it means the true God, that it says ha-theos. That is, it gives the definite article the, ha, theos.

That's not true. Later in this chapter, there are many times when the word theos is used without the definite article, which if they are to be consistent, you'd have to translate it a God. However, throughout the rest of the text, it's always clearly the God.

And even in their own translation, they only render it a God in verse 1. Later instances throughout the chapter where it says God, where it says theos, it likewise lacks the definite article, but they translate it God. In other words, they are inconsistent. They have translated verse 1 the way they have for convenience sake, not because of some compelling rule of Greek grammar.

Now, furthermore, there'd be the question of the theological difficulty of their translation. If their translation says the word was with God and the word was a God, if that's the correct translation here, then it is teaching quite plainly that Jehovah God had another God with Him. Right? The word was a God and He was with God, so there was another God besides Jehovah who was with Jehovah.

Yet, the Bible simply doesn't leave any room for that theological concept. Look with me at Deuteronomy chapter 32. Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 39.

It says, this is Jehovah speaking, Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me. And the King James actually says, there's no God with Me, which is even closer to a reputation of the Jehovah's Witness text in John 1. God says, there's no God with Me, there's no God beside Me, and yet the Jehovah's Witnesses would have us to believe that the word was a God and was with God. So there were two gods, Jehovah and the word.

But God doesn't allow for that. At the very time, that is Old Testament time, when the Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus was a God with Jehovah, God Himself would say, no, there's no God with Me here, I'm alone. I'm in a class by Myself.

Look at Isaiah chapter 41 and verse 4. Isaiah 41.4. God says, who has performed and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, Jehovah, am the first, and with the last, I am He. Now look at chapter 43 of Isaiah and verse 10. Isaiah 43.10. This is actually the verse with which the Jehovah's Witnesses describe themselves.

Every copy of the Watchtower, their publication actually has the beginning of this verse printed on the cover. You are My witnesses, says Jehovah. They don't read the rest of it, however.

And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I am the Lord, besides Me there is no Savior.

Etc. Now, He says, there was no God formed before Him, nor after Him. There's no other God, in other words, besides Him.

If the Jehovah's Witnesses are correct, then Jesus was a God who was formed by Jehovah God, a created God. But the Bible doesn't allow for that. There's only one God, and the Bible knows of no other than He.

And so on through the book of Isaiah and elsewhere, we read frequently of the fact that God had no other gods with Him. Therefore, for the translation of John 1.1 to be decided, does it mean the word was a God or was the word God? If we make it the word was God, we have only a logical problem to overcome. How could the word be with God and be God? But if we translate it with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the word was a God, then we have a worse problem.

Worse than a logical problem, we have a theological problem. We've got more than one God. And both Judaism and Christianity have this as their principal distinctives among the worlds of religions at that time, anyway, is that they were monotheistic.

They believed in only one God. Now, the Jehovah's Witnesses say, well, He's not really a real God, but He was a... He's called God as a concession. I mean, after all, isn't the devil called the God of this world? And wasn't Moses said to be a God to Pharaoh and Aaron was to be his prophet? Yes, those terms are spoken of that way.

But the fact of the matter is, the Bible indicates there are many lesser things that are sometimes called gods, but only one true God. For anyone to view Moses as God is to be too short-sighted. He's not truly a God.

He's not inherently a God. To call Satan the God of this world is simply to acknowledge that some people worship him, just like some people worship Baal or Moloch, and those are called gods too, the gods of the heathen. But those are all false gods.

Those are not inherently deity. And Jesus is inherently deity. He and the Father are one, He said.

And Jesus frequently made reference to the fact that He and His Father are united and are one. And the Bible teaches that Jesus and God are one. Jesus is not another God other than Jehovah.

He is simply the Word of Jehovah. And the Word, how can He be with God and be God? Well, I don't know that any analogy can work perfectly. I will say this, that I can talk about my thinking or my thoughts or my reasoning as being me, because really my personality is what constitutes the way I think, my values, my reasoning and so forth.

It is me. On the other hand, I can talk about my reasoning as being something, depending on how I wish to talk about it, as something separate from me. If I went crazy, you could say I've lost my reason, but that doesn't mean that I've lost myself.

I've lost something integral to myself. But my reason can be something that exists separately from me or I separately from it. At the same time, there's an identification of the two that you can talk both ways about that.

And apparently the Word, who eventually became Jesus, can be identified with God as being God and at the same time being someone who is spoken of as having separate, distinctive existence as well. How do we harmonize that? Well, I'll tell you what I do. I harmonize it by saying it's a great mystery.

And we'll talk more about it when we get to verse 14 and how it is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. But Paul says it is a great mystery. In 1 Timothy 3.16 he said, without controversy, Great is the mystery of godliness.

He, God, was manifested in the flesh. So Jesus was manifested in the flesh. That obviously, or God was manifested in the flesh and that manifestation was Jesus.

Very obviously, that makes some kind of identification as well as some kind of distinction from God. Jesus talked about God as someone other than himself and yet the Bible speaks of Jesus as being God manifested in the flesh. What we do with that is simply do what Paul said.

Beyond controversy, this is a great mystery. And we can live with mystery. We must.

There's many things about God that we don't fully understand. Certainly God wants us to know Him. Even to know and understand Him.

It says that in Jeremiah 9.23 and 24. Let Him glory in this, that He understands and knows me, says the Lord. But to understand God doesn't mean you understand all the mysteries of His eternal nature, but it means His character.

He wants us to understand His character. He says, let Him glory in this, that He understands and knows me, that I'm the God who exercises loving kindness and justice and mercy. And in these things I delight.

In other words, what God wants us to understand about Him is not His biological makeup, if there is such a thing in God, but His personality and His character. That's

Jeremiah 9.23 and 24. I want my children to understand me, but it doesn't matter that they don't quite understand how my nervous system works.

Or how my circulatory system or my digestive system or my reproductive system works. I don't even fully understand all those things about myself. Therefore, it's no part of my concern that my children should understand such things as that about me.

What I want them to understand is my concern for them, my care and my commitment to them, and my character and my nature. And that's what God insists that we understand about Him. Not every mystery about His nature, about the essence of His existence.

And therefore, if He can exist in three persons, as many people prefer to describe it, and still be one God, this is a mystery. It's a mystery that we can live with if God tells us that it is so. Just as we can live with the mystery of how God could always have existed and never begun.

That's a mystery to me. And if God would say, well, here, let me solve the mystery for you. I haven't always existed.

I was actually created by such and such factor, which, for lack of a better term, we'll call that factor X. Factor X was the first cause that created God. That doesn't solve my problem. My next question, obviously, is, well, who made factor X? And, you know, if there's no great answer, we could say, well, factor Z created factor X. But that's just going to transport the problem back further.

The fact of the matter is, no matter how far back we go, we can always, in our minds, contemplate something prior. Same thing about the future. Eternity is a reality.

Eternity past, eternity future. And it boggles the mind. The mind reels at the attempt to conceive of eternity.

But God apparently has no problem conceiving of it. Therefore, for God to say, listen, I'm uncreated. I've always been here.

I had no beginning. I'm not caused by anything. I'm just self-existent.

Just a moment here. We've had some problems with that tape recorder in the past couple of sessions. It's working now.

For God to say a thing like that, apparently He understands it. It apparently doesn't boggle His mind, but it's baffling to me. But that's okay.

I can live with mysteries about such things as that. If I didn't know what kind of a God He was, I'd be in much greater consternation. If I didn't know whether I had a loving God or not, or a just and merciful God or not, or a capricious God, or maybe a cruel and angry

God, if I was uncertain about those factors, I would live in trepidation.

But not to fully understand how He has always existed or how He could exist in three persons or some other objective factor about His nature, that's okay. Okay with me. If it's not okay with you, you're going to have struggles.

You're going to have struggles with the Bible. You run into Him at the first verse that attempts to describe or explain who Jesus is. So studying the life of Christ, you run into trouble in verse one of our investigation.

But if we can accept it, that Jesus was God before He was on earth. He was in another sense with God, so He had some separate identity as well as a joined identity of some sort. And that what He is referred to as the Word, then we can proceed from there.

We can't proceed with a full understanding or grasp, but we can proceed believing what has been revealed. He, and here we see verse two, for the first time here John personalizes the Word. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. Now this is simply to point out that He was the creative agent. That when God created, He used His words.

He spoke. Only of course John has introduced the idea here that the Word is a living person and not just sound. Now it's very important here on our theology of Jesus, on the question of whether Jesus is a created being or not.

Because those who do not believe that He was Jehovah God, believe that He was created by Jehovah God. But the problem is met right here. Without Him nothing was made that was made.

So everything that stands in the category of things that are made or created things was made through Him. And nothing is in that category that was not made through Him. Now therefore there is no way that He can be in the category of things that are made.

Because not one thing was made that was made except through His agency. So He must have existed prior to the creation of anything. He cannot be one of the things that were made.

The wording of John is too emphatic. He says it twice in the same verse, two different ways, just so we can't miss it. All things were made through Him, and in case you're still thinking that maybe He was one of the things that was made, He states it another way.

Without Him nothing was made that was made. John couldn't be more emphatic. How else could he state it? If he wanted to clearly state that the Word was not one of the created things, does not stand in the class of things made, but actually was prior to



everything that was made and the agent through whom God made it all.

Then he introduces a new concept in verse four. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. Now we come to the life motif.

In Him was life. Now, God's Word is identified with life, and also in this passage with light. Both ideas are found elsewhere in Scripture.

Back in Psalm 119, I think in verse 130, it says, The entrance of thy word giveth light. Psalm 119, verse 130. Yes, the entrance of your words gives light.

It gives understanding to the simple. So light, in the case of the psalm here, Psalm 119, verse 130, is parallel with understanding. Enlightenment, light to the mind, light to the soul.

Light as opposed to obscurity. Clarity instead of ambiguity. Jesus made clear and gave understanding and revealed to us that which we would have been otherwise in darkness about.

How? Through His life. His life was the light of men. When we study the life of Jesus, and not only the events of His life, but the essence of His life, which is seen in the events of His life.

You see the quality of His life, the character of the man, in the events of His life, in His actions, in His reactions, in His statements. The kind of life that dwelt among us in the body of Jesus was, of course, seen in the events of His life. And that's why we study the events of His life.

Not because we're just curious about what happened, but we're curious about who He is and what He's like. And when His life is manifest to us, it is enlightening. It gives clarity.

It gives understanding to us. God's Word is a living Word. Jesus is first called the Word and it says, "...and in Him was life." We saw a moment ago in 1 John 1, when He called Jesus the Word of life.

There are other places in the Bible that speak of the Word of God being alive. For example, 1 Peter 1. Verse 23. 1 Peter 1.23 says, "...having been born again, we have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever." The Word of God is not just noise, it's a living thing.

The Word of God lives. Unlike our words, if they're simply our human words, the Word of God is a living entity. Likewise, Hebrews 4, perhaps even a better known verse than that.

Hebrews 4.12 says, "...the Word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword." The Word of God is living. In Him, in the Word, there is life. Even when Jesus was manifest in the flesh, His words were living words.

Jesus said in John 6.63, "...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." His words are life. John 6.63. And near the end of that chapter, when Jesus asked His twelve disciples, will you also go away, since everybody else seemed to be abandoning Him? In John 6.68, Simon Peter answered Him, "...from Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." When Jesus spoke, His words were life. They were spirit and they were life.

His disciples recognized that. But what they perhaps didn't recognize at that early date was that Jesus Himself was the living Word, manifest in human form. Though John, of course, came to realize that and recorded it for us, as no other gospel writer did.

Now getting back to the passage of John 1. Having introduced the idea of Word, Life, and Light, he now proceeds to say something more about the Light. Jesus as Light. Verse 5, "...the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." Now, the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The word comprehend is sometimes preferred to be translated overcome. It could be either way. Those who dwelt in darkness didn't comprehend Jesus.

They couldn't understand His words, His spoken parables, in order to obscure truth from them. But those who came into the Light, those who came to Jesus and walked in the Light, they did comprehend because He explained these things to them. But some translators, perhaps most, would rather understand it this way.

The darkness did not overcome the Light. Which is true also, and may be the better translation in this case. But Jesus brought Light to the world, and the darkness resisted that Light, but could not extinguish that Light.

Certainly the history of Christianity is a proof of that. The book of Acts is an excellent example of that. Because repeatedly in the book of Acts, as Luke tells the story of the early church, he joins together two motifs, continually, repeatedly in the book of Acts.

Great persecution against the Word, and great prosperity and prevalence of the Word. Repeatedly, after it tells us about the stoning of Stephen, or about this or that problem that has come up, Luke goes out of his way to make note of this fact, and the Word of God spread and prevailed, and bore fruit, or whatever. I mean, it gives a lot of different ways of saying that.

But what the book of Acts is a picture of, is the fact that the Light was opposed all the time by darkness, but the darkness could never stop it. And of course, that was true before the book of Acts, in the life of Jesus Himself. Much opposition He faced.

And the Pharisees and others were trying to extinguish His Light, but couldn't do it, until they finally killed Him. But even that didn't stop Him, because in His resurrection, He proved that the darkness couldn't overcome Him. Death couldn't overcome Life, and

darkness could not overcome Light.

And so, John is saying, Light and darkness are definitely in contrast to each other, but the Light shines in the darkness, and is obviously superior to it. In order to bring darkness into this room, we would have to simply shut out all the sources of Light. Because darkness is simply the absence of Light.

On the other hand, if we wanted to make a darkened room light, we don't have to do anything, we don't have to remove darkness. We simply have to introduce Light. And with the entrance of Light, darkness gives place.

Darkness cannot overcome it. And so, with the Light, or the understanding of God, and the revelation of God that Jesus brought, those forces that were opposed to that truth, to that revelation, did all they could to extinguish the Light, but failed to do so. And John, I think, is suggesting that here.

Now, when we come to John 1, 6 through 8, we need to understand that John is introducing a parenthesis here. It has to do with John the Baptist. You can see that it's parenthetical by the fact that verse 9 follows quite naturally after verse 5. Verse 5 is talking about the Light, and so is verse 9. But the parenthesis in verses 6 through 8 is about John, and basically he introduces the parenthesis here as a disclaimer.

He's saying, now John wasn't the Light. He's been talking about the One who was the Light, but now he introduces in three verses an extended disclaimer saying, don't think that John the Baptist was the Light. He wasn't.

There's two such interruptions in the flow here in this prologue of John. The other one is in verse 15, where he also basically emphasizes that John bore witness to Jesus, not to himself. John said that Jesus was preferred before him.

Now, if you'll notice, verse 15 is very much like verses 6 through 8. Both of them talk about John. Both of them emphasize that he's not the end-all and be-all, and he's not the Light himself, but he always said that Jesus was better than he was. Also, in both cases, verses 6 through 8 on the one hand and verse 15 on the other, interrupt the flow of thought to the extent that if you omitted those verses about John, the thought would flow very smoothly.

For example, verse 14 would flow naturally to verse 16. Verse 14 ends with the words that Jesus was full of grace and truth, and verse 16 says, and of His fullness we have all received grace for grace. The law came through Moses.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The idea of grace, especially grace linked with truth, is introduced at the end of verse 14 and then continues in verse 16 and 17. Verse 15 interrupts it.

These two parts that talk about John are, we should say, parentheses. A parenthetical section is one that sort of is an aside. Like in some of the older English dramas, you know, somebody would put his hand by his mouth and speak to the audience, and it's something on the side that the people on the stage were supposed to not hear.

It was more or less to give you an insight into the thoughts of the guy. It's something on the side that doesn't really play any role in the story itself. It just gives you some insight on the side.

But a parenthesis, by its very nature, could be omitted, and the story would go very nicely without it. The reason a parenthesis is present is because of the need felt by the author to clarify something. Something that perhaps could go without saying, but is better said.

Better said because there might be some lack of clarification if it is omitted. Now, what is being clarified in these two parentheses? Both of them are saying essentially the same thing. John isn't the light.

John isn't the greatest. Jesus is greater. Why would the writer John say this? He's not talking about himself.

This is a different John. John who wrote the gospel is John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. The John in the passage is, of course, John the Baptist who didn't write anything.

And so there are these two disclaimers that are saying don't mistake John the Baptist for the one who is the light. Now, I'd like to suggest to you, we can't prove this, I'd like to suggest to you that John the writer knew that some in his audience were prone to give John the Baptist who was too high a status. It is believed on very strong authority of Papias and of church tradition that John the gospel writer wrote this living in Ephesus, probably to be kept and circulated within his own city and maybe other cities as well, but especially Ephesus.

Near the end of the book of Acts, actually I guess it's not too near the end, it's Acts 19, the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus after Apollos had been there. And he found twelve men who were described as disciples, but their understanding was very deficient. And it says they only knew about the baptism of John the Baptist.

That's also the same thing that was deficient in Apollos' message previously in chapter 18 of Acts. He was instructed in the ways of the Lord, but he knew only the baptism of John. Now, it's very difficult, perhaps even impossible, for us to identify with certainty what the exact problem was with Apollos' teaching or these twelve disciples.

Did they know about Jesus? Did they know nothing about Jesus? It's not clear. We're not told in detail what it was that they knew or didn't know. But one thing is clear.

They knew more about John the Baptist than they knew about Jesus, or at least he was more significant to them because they only knew about baptizing with John's baptism, not the baptism of Christ. And this was in Ephesus. The same church, the same city that later the gospel of John was written in, and probably to.

This is only a deduction that may or may not be true. It's reading between the lines. But very possibly there was a continuing element in Ephesus who tended to idolize John the Baptist too much at the expense of emphasizing Jesus.

If that is so, it would explain why John, in talking about the great light, who is the light of men, would twice interrupt his prologue saying, I'm not talking about John. Actually, John talked about Jesus. Same thing that Paul had to say to those men in Ephesus in Acts 19.

He says, John preached this, but he also said you should believe on one who came after him. That is Jesus. So I don't know whether we can read this into the picture.

I suppose if we don't suggest a scenario like this, it's hard to explain why John would interrupt twice his prologue. The flow of thought is greatly interrupted by these two statements about John the Baptist. I think it's probably reasonably fair to say that John was seeking to correct an imbalance that existed in some of his potential readers who may have exalted John the Baptist too highly, and John a couple of times wants to deflate that a little bit with his statements.

Now, we'll talk more about John a little later in verse 19, but let's go on with talking about Jesus. Having said in verse 5 that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness could not comprehend or perhaps overcome it, verse 9 says, that was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. Now, that's a very sweeping statement.

Jesus was the true light that gives light to every man coming into the world. How are we to understand that? It certainly cannot be that everyone who is born knows about Jesus personally, knows something about the life of Jesus. If that were true, there would be no need for us to preach the gospel.

Everyone would already know. However, it probably says that all men who come into the world have access to some light, that is, some revelation, some understanding of God, although it may be very deficient and it may be very fragmentary. We know that Romans chapter 1 tells us that there is enough revelation of God in the creation itself to render sinners excuseless.

Paul says, so they are without excuse. Because the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and deity, are manifested in the things He's made. Paul gets that concept from the Old Testament.

Psalms 19, verse 1, says, the heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows

forth His handiwork. So, Psalm 19 tells us that the things God has made declare His glory.

And Paul picks up on the theme and says, amen. In Romans 1, he says, the glory, the majesty, the eternal Godhead and power of Jehovah God is seen in what He has made so that sinners are without excuse if they claim ignorance. Now, you can't know everything there is to know about God by looking at nature, but you could deduce that there is a God, and a mighty one at that.

And even a good one. Although nature shows evidence of evil, and there are some very ugly things in nature. Charles Darwin, trying to disprove the idea of creation, said he couldn't conceive of a God who would make a certain species of caterpillar whose larva just feasted on the inside of another insect, you know, and ate it alive.

Or of a wasp that laid its eggs inside the living body of a spider, of a tarantula, so that the young wasps, when they would hatch, would just live off the living flesh of the tarantula. He just thought that's such a cruel arrangement that he couldn't imagine a loving God doing that. And there's more than one person who's argued that way.

You know, there's so much cruelty and suffering in the world. That would argue for a very evil God, if any God at all, as the maker. On the other hand, there's a whole lot of other data.

One set of data is that God has made, or whoever made it, made the world a very beautiful place. One that we can appreciate. He's made it an enjoyable place.

That the things that we must do to live are also enjoyable things. He could have made it otherwise. Eating, reproducing, sleeping.

Things that are necessary for the good of our race are also things that are enjoyable to do. He could have made those things not enjoyable. He made the world a colorful place when he could have made it in black and white and much less appealing.

There's many things that suggest God's goodness in his making of things that simply beautify and enhance the enjoyment of existence of the creatures on this earth. As far as the cruelty and the evil or whatever it appears to be, we have strong reasons to believe that that is not the way God originally made it. Of course, the Bible would reveal more specifically that it isn't the way God made it.

What he made was all very good, but all evil and all cruelty came about later as the result of the fall. But we could deduce that even without the Bible. How could we? Because, as C.S. Lewis put it, we could hardly even recognize evil if we didn't have an innate concept of what good is.

You can't recognize a crooked line if you have no concept of a straight one. And

therefore, the fact that people can even talk about evil in the world as somehow going against the grain of the way things ought to be, means that they have some innate conception of oughtness, some innate conception of rightness, of goodness, of justice. Where did this come from? Where did this universal instinct come from if it's not something that is even more primeval in man's nature than evil itself? It's prior to evil because it judges evil.

It stands in judgment of evil. Therefore, it must be prior and more fundamental than evil itself, which argues for something of evil being an evidence of fallenness from something that was once better that we still have a primeval instinct about. Maybe it would take a rather pensive philosophical type who had never heard of God to think of these things, but such people have thought of them.

Unbelievers have thought these things through. They haven't necessarily come to know Jesus as we know Jesus through those things, but all these things are available. If a man or a woman decided, without any other revelation than what he sees in nature or she sees in nature, to reason and to meditate upon the things that are visible, they would reach many conclusions very similar to those which we have revealed to us in the Scripture about God.

Not all of them, because nature is not a perfect revelation of God. That's why there needed to be special revelation in the form of God's inscripturated words, His prophets, and Jesus coming to the world to give more specific revelation. But everyone has some light.

Jesus is that light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world, and nobody is totally without light. Many preachers at this point would also argue that all men have some sense of conscience. Paul speaks about people having the law written in their hearts.

People who don't have the written law of Scripture have the law written in their hearts in the form of their conscience in Romans 2. Though I have some question as to whether Paul is making the point from this that most people think he is. We're talking about Romans 2 and verses 13 and 14, and I guess 15 as well, where Paul says, For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

Basically, most commentators seem to feel that Paul is saying that even Gentiles who've had no exposure to the special revelation of God's word have the general revelation of a conscience which is like God's word written in their hearts. They still excuse or accuse. That is, they still recognize the difference between right and wrong.

And even if it's a bit twisted, they have at least an innate concept that some things are right and some things are wrong. Where did this moral concept come from if not from God himself? Well, that's another way of arguing it. I'm not sure Paul's making that point there.

We'll have to wait until we talk about Romans to explore that. Now, every man has some light. John appears to be saying that whatever form that light comes to every man in, that's still a revelation from Jesus.

That's still something of God's word. God speaks through nature. He speaks through man's innate instincts about good and evil.

And he speaks, of course, in more specific ways through prophets and through Jesus Christ. But whether it's through the person of Jesus or through any other way that God speaks, his word is the light that enlightens everyone at some level. Everyone who comes into the world has some light.

Now, this may give us some clue as to how God will deal with people who have never heard the gospel. It may not, but it may. This verse, John 1, 9, suggests that every man, whether they hear the gospel or not, is nonetheless enlightened at some level.

It may be a rudimentary level. It may be a very vague and unspecific level. But at some level, Jesus is the light that gives light to every man.

If you'll turn to John 3, Jesus talks about why people are condemned. Interestingly, Jesus doesn't make the assumption that modern theology does, that they're born guilty of Adam's sin, which is a doctrine deduced from one passage, a very obscure passage in Romans 5, which may not, in fact, be quite properly interpreted that way. But if you look at this, John 3, 17 says, For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world. That's what it says in John 1. He is the light that shines in darkness.

He gives light to every man that comes into the world. Well, the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed.

But he who does the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. Now, this is why people are condemned. Some people are condemned and some are not.



What's the difference? The ones who are condemned are the ones who see light and hate it. Those who are not condemned are those who see light and come to it, because they are doers of truth. They're honest people.

They're people of integrity. They're people who value truth. Now, the light is never flattering to the sinner.

The person who lives in darkness picks up a lot of dirt that they never notice. It's too dark. If you lived in a dark room all the time, it might be full of soot and you might be covered with black soot, but you'd never know it even if there was a mirror in the room.

There's no light. You can't see what you are. But if someone turned on the light and you looked in the mirror, you could see how dirty you are.

And all men living in darkness pick up a lot of soot, pick up a lot of dirt. But when the light comes, it shows how dirty we are. And men who love truth, even unflattering truth, welcome that light, welcome that revelation, and respond favorably to it.

Men who do not like unflattering truth, they seek to extinguish it or they run from it. They hate it. And Jesus said, this is the basic difference between people who are going to be condemned or who are already condemned and those who are not.

It's the way they respond to light. Now, no doubt, John chapter 3 is talking about Jesus himself in his earthly existence as the light. But John has already told us that light has come to every man in the world, which would have to include even those who have not yet heard of Jesus or seen Jesus, and may live their lifetimes without having a missionary reach them.

Yet, there is some form of light. And God distinguishes between one type of man and another by the way they respond to light. Do they love it or do they hate it? Now, I'm not saying there's no need to preach the gospel.

Because people who have never heard the gospel do not know enough of the truth to be set free from sin, to overcome the powers of darkness, to live a life glorifying to God. And our whole concern is not tied up with just getting people to go to heaven. God is concerned about that, but He's got something else in mind as well.

He wants people to live lives in this life that glorify Him. That He might have a people unto His praise and a people unto His glory. And that is the passion that should spur our missionary efforts.

It's not, oh, these poor sinners are going to go to hell if we don't reach them. Maybe they will. Maybe they don't.

We don't know. We really don't have any specific answers from God as to what He's

going to do about people who have never heard the gospel. Although this passage may suggest He'll judge them on the basis of how they responded to the light.

And if they responded to whatever light they had, maybe Jesus will save them on that basis. Who can say? There are certainly some who think that's what God will do. Whether that's true or not, we will not know until Jesus comes back.

But we do know this. It's not just getting people to heaven. God has a purpose for having made the human race in the first place and having made the earth as a habitable place because He wants there to be a people that glorify Him.

The Bible says the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. And that is why we must tell them even if we would come to the conclusion that some men might possibly get to heaven without having heard the gospel if they responded well to whatever light they had. I'm not saying that is the correct conclusion.

But if it is, there's still motivation for missions. Because it's not enough. You can't overcome the power of darkness without knowing about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They overcome Him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. And therefore, for sin to be conquered in the light, for a life to be lived in the way that God is pleased with, requires that people know the gospel and know the truth and be disciples. And therefore, we must reach them.

But as far as the question of their eternal destiny, what if they live and die their entire life without ever hearing the gospel? Is there any hope for them? God only knows. There may be a clue that He's given us here, but we can't make too much of it. The suggestion is there is some light that every man has received.

Perhaps if they are favorably disposed toward what little light they have, God will honor that and give them more light. And if they're favorably disposed toward that, maybe He'll give them more still. I would not be surprised.

We heard of whole villages in... I'm trying to remember what country it was. Do you remember where the dreams of Jesus came from? That wasn't Nepal. That was somewhere else.

Some other Asian unreached... Oh, it was Albania, wasn't it? Algeria. Algeria, okay. In Algeria, yeah, where everyone in a village had dreams the same night of Jesus.

It was a Muslim village. And everyone the same night had a dream of Jesus saying, I'm God. You've got to believe in me.

And so the whole village got converted. I mean, God doesn't do that all the time. It may surprise us.

If He can do that, why doesn't He do it all the time? He alone knows why. But I'll say this, the fact that He does it once means He can do it any time He wants. And if He perceives in a primitive person living out in a tribal area that no Christian knows the language or will ever reach in that person's lifetime, if He sees in them a desire for more light, I'm sure God has plenty of it to give.

And He can reveal Christ to them. He revealed Christ in that way to Paul, to Saul of Tarsus. And there's some reason to believe that there may have been others historically that He revealed Himself to that way.

But what I would point out about verse 9 of John 1 is that regardless of what kind of light every man has, that light, whether it's little or great, whether it's vague and hazy or brilliantly bright, is identified with Jesus. If a person has only the light of nature, that doesn't mean Jesus is nature, but it means that the revelation that God has given them is a part of the whole revelatory activity of God, which is identified with Jesus. So that in a sense, to respond to whatever light they've been given is to respond to Jesus.

Although there's certainly a great deal to be said about knowing Jesus as He is and particularly in the context of His historical existence. But let me go on here. Verse 10.

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 His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God 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. Now let's stop there for a moment. We probably won't get any further than verse 14.

In fact, we'll have to pick it up again next time at that point. But let me try to deal with verses 10-13 if I can. Everything that is said in verses 10-13 could apply to Jesus during His earthly life.

He came to His own people. He came to His own land, the Jews, and they didn't receive Him. The world He created didn't recognize Him when He came to earth.

But the ones who did, He gave the power to become the children of God. Now, it can be understood that way. But I'd like to suggest to you that very possibly John means it some other way.

He introduces the birth of Jesus in verse 14. It is possible that verses 10-13 are talking about the way that God enlightened men or that Jesus enlightened men prior to His birth

in Bethlehem. He was in the world.

The creation itself declared His glory. There was a revelation. There was light given to man in the creation itself.

He was in the world that He made, but the world for the most part rejected Him. In the days of Noah, there's a good example of that, or the days of Abraham. Before God had a people of His own, the world that He made screamed out of God's existence.

But for the most part, the world wasn't listening. The world paid no attention. The world didn't recognize the Word of God, the Word of the Creator.

Though God was trying to communicate, the world wasn't listening. And then in verse 11, He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. Now, twice in this verse, we see the word His own.

However, it's not the same in the Greek. The first time it says His own, He came to His own, it's a neuter. It's not masculine or feminine.

It's neuter. He came to His own. Most translations think it should be His own place, His own home.

And then the second, but His own did not receive Him, that's in the masculine and the plural, which is His own people. So, it's as if it says He came to His own place, but His own people didn't receive Him. Now, this would be a development beyond verse 10.

Verse 10 just says He came into the world, and the world He made didn't recognize Him. Then a step is taken further. He identified a people and a place as His own, and He came to them, and they didn't receive Him either, for the most part.

Now, this could still be a reference to prior to the Incarnation. The Word of God came to the Jews on many occasions through the prophets. The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.

The Word of the Lord came to Zechariah. The Word of the Lord came to these prophets. And they said, Thus saith the Lord.

This Word, who later became flesh, was none other than Jesus in His preexistent state. He came to His own people through the words of the prophets, which was the Word of God, through the Old Testament, through the law that Moses gave. In these ways, the Word was their light.

That's certainly how David understood the Word of God, which was the Scriptures. He said, Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. God gave light even prior to the coming of Jesus, and that light was through His Word.

And He came in the form of His Word to His people, the Jews. First, He came to the world before there were Jews. Before He selected a people to be His own, He just came into His world that He made, and they didn't accept Him.

Then He selected a people and a place to be His own, Israel. And He came there to them in a special revelation through the prophets. And they didn't receive it either.

They killed the prophets and rejected the words of the prophets. However, there was a remnant that did receive the words of the prophets, and they are mentioned in verse 12. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe in His name.

This, of course, we usually apply to the present, those who believe in Jesus, those who believe in the Gospel as we have it in the New Testament, have the right to become children of God. And we do. It's entirely applicable.

But it's also possible that He's referring to this time prior to Jesus coming to earth. For the most part, the Jews did not receive the Word of the prophets, which was Jesus prior to His incarnation. The Jews did not receive the revelation God sent them, but a few did.

And those who did have the privilege of being called the sons of God. And they were. In the Old Testament, in Hosea, the believing Jews are said to be the sons of God, God's sons.

And Isaiah said, God, surely You are our Father, and we are Your children. The believing remnant of Israel were called God's sons. Now, verse 13 is difficult because it says, who were born not of blood, literally in the Greek, bloods, plural, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now, what makes this difficult is it seems to be talking about the persons in the previous verse who were called the sons of God. They were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of flesh, but of God. And to speak about people being born of God seems to be a reality that belongs to the New Testament, not the Old.

To be born again is a New Testament phenomenon, I believe. Now, some people believe that Old Testament believers were regenerated. Maybe, but I don't think so.

I don't see that as a biblical teaching. It says, actually, in 1 Peter 1 and verse 3, that we have been begotten again, or born again, unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. 1 Peter 1.3 Which suggests that until the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, people were not born again in the sense that we are.

We have been begotten again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Which suggests to me that it's one of the functions of the New Covenant. One of the privileges of the New Covenant is regeneration.

That we're born again as a result of Jesus' resurrection. It's resurrection life given to us. Jesus was the first to experience this resurrection life and He now passes along to those of us who are in Him.

That's what I understand to be the New Testament teaching. Although there are some who believe that in some sense, those who believed in the Old Testament times were also regenerated. I'm not sure.

But the statement in verse 13 as it stands, looks like it's talking about believers being born of God and that is a phenomenon that I think is reserved in the New Testament to New Testament believers. Which would suggest then that verse 12 is not talking about the time prior to the Incarnation, but since. Do you have an insight on that Matt? Right, but he didn't say that he would be born again at that moment.

He said that if a man, he said unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. He didn't say at what point that privilege would be made available. Just like Jesus in John chapter 7 verses 37 through 39 said, If anyone thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.

And out of his belly, as the Scripture said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John comments on that in John 7 verse 39. It says, This he spoke of the Holy Spirit who was not yet given.

Even though Jesus was saying if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. John says, well, that offer was not really available until Jesus was glorified, until Jesus was resurrected. John 7 verse 39.

So it's possible, I mean certainly Jesus began to talk during his lifetime about a phenomenon and about a system that would be set into motion as a result of his death and resurrection. And he was already talking about it prior to his death. But as far as the realization of those things, in my opinion, they were given at the time of his resurrection, as a result of his resurrection.

I may not be seeing it correctly, but that's how I interpret especially 1 Peter 1 verse 3 and some other ideas. Now, perhaps it's not the most important point in the world, but this is the point I want to make from it. It seems to be saying that the believers in verse 13 were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

However, in fact, there are some manuscripts, not many, and they are largely not followed by most scholars. Some manuscripts have it say who was born not of blood, in which case it would be he whose name is mentioned at the end of verse 12, Jesus. He was born not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

He, in other words, is the one that they believed in His name. And in favor of this, although very few manuscripts support this particular reading, there are some scholars

who believe it's the more accurate reading. And it would agree with verse 14 because the subject matter of verse 14 is the birth of Jesus.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. To say in that context that He was born not of a human father, not of the will of man, but of God, would be a reference to His virgin birth. Now, there's much dispute over the reading, and we can't really go into it right now.

We've run out of time. We're going to have to quit here. We'll pick it up again next time at verse 13 and 14.

But some would say that verse 13 introduces the concept of Jesus' virgin birth. And we'll have to examine that in the light of verse 14 next time. Okay.

Any questions?