

ECF 6th January 2019 John 1:1-5 Fix your Eyes on Jesus

This is the time of year that we often make all sorts of resolutions to change something about ourselves. But so often these resolutions fail to transform our lives as we wish – either because they are not radical enough, or because they don't last as we fall back into bad habits.

And so at the start of this year, we need something more than a resolution to fix our lives. Have a look at this: [Video: Seek God firsts](#)

This year we are going to try to fix our eyes on Jesus, to seek him first in our lives. And to do that, we're going to study the amazing Gospel of John. In many ways, it is a daunting challenge, as there is just so much truth packed into this book, and yet, I pray that it will help us to get a fresh vision of who Jesus is and what he can do in our lives.

1. The Purpose of John's Gospel

After all, this is why John wrote his gospel. With many books of the Bible, we need to put effort into working out the reason and purpose for why it was written. However, with this gospel, John made it really easy for us.

In John 20:30-31: ["Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."](#)

a) Not So We'll Know Everything About Jesus

John was not trying to give an exhaustive list of everything that Jesus did. ["Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book."](#) John 20:30 I think this is especially obvious with this gospel, as it is very different from the other three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are called the synoptic gospels because of the similarities between them, but John is different.

There are aspects of Jesus' life and ministry that are in the synoptic gospels that are absent in John's gospel, and there are aspects of Jesus' life and ministry that are only found in John's gospel. And so none of the writers gave us a comprehensive description of everything Jesus did.

One reason for this, is simply there is too much information. John 21:25: ["Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."](#)

b) But So We'll Believe in Jesus

But the other reason for this is that John was being deliberately selective in what he wrote, because he had a very clear purpose in writing. He was not writing a biography or historical textbook on the life of Jesus. He was not even trying to record the most interesting or exciting bits.

Instead he was writing to reveal who Jesus is, so that people would believe in him: ["But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."](#) John 20:31

John knew that recognising the true identity of Jesus is not easy. He and the other disciples had even struggled to do this at first. But the evidence that was presented to them over three years with Jesus convinced them that Jesus was not just a good man, a great teacher, nor even a prophet sent from God – but that he was none other than the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of God.

And so John wrote his gospel to provide this evidence to encourage others to do the same. In particular, he described seven miraculous signs that provide signposts to the identity of Jesus. He used them to help us walk on a journey of discovery to see who Jesus really is, and then to put our trust in him.

c) And have Life Through Jesus

And this is so crucial, because it literally is a matter of life and death. John wanted people to put their faith in Jesus, so that ["by believing you may have life in his name."](#) John 20:31

John wrote his gospel so that people would see who Jesus really is, so that they would believe in him and receive the gift of real, eternal life in all its fullness, that only he can give.

So if you're here this morning and you haven't accepted this gift of life, then this book is written to help you come to faith,

so that you won't miss out on this life to the full.

But if we're here this morning, and we have accepted this gift of life through faith in Jesus, then this book is still essential for us too. It will help us to

- SEE the true identity of Jesus more clearly,
- So that we'll STRENGTHEN our faith in him and dependence on him,
- and SEEK him first in our lives
- And so we'll STEP more fully into this life that he has given,
- and be able to more effectively SHARE the good news of Jesus with others.

And John wastes no time in helping us to do this in his gospel. He starts with a remarkable introduction that summarises who Jesus is and what he can do in our lives. This morning, we'll just look at the first 5 verses of it.

So turn to John 1:1-5: ["In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.](#)

[³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."](#)

2. The Word

["The Word"](#) John 1:1 in this passage is the Greek word, logos. It was a commonly used word in John's day that meant simply "speaking or a message or words."

- However in Greek philosophy, logos was also used to mean something like "reason," and they believed it to be the force which structured the universe.
- It was also full of meaning to the Jews, as the Old Testament described the Word of God as God's powerful and effective action in creation, revelation, deliverance and judgement.

But here John took this common word and concept and gave it a new and deeper meaning. For John, the Word is not a philosophical idea, an impersonal force, nor even just the communication of God's truth. Instead, the Word is a person whom he had met, had got to know and ultimately had believed in. John 1:14: ["The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."](#)

This is what we've just celebrated at Christmas. The Word became a human being and was born in Bethlehem, to a virgin called Mary, was wrapped in cloths, laid in a manger, and given the name Jesus, ["Because he will save his people from their sins."](#) Matthew 1:21

a) He is Eternal

But although this was the beginning of Jesus' life on earth, this was not the beginning of the person who is called the Word. John said, ["In the beginning was the Word."](#) John 1:1

Anyone with any kind of familiarity with the Bible will see what John is doing here. The first book of the Bible, which we call Genesis, starts with the words, ["In the beginning God..."](#) Genesis 1:1 Moses was saying that in the beginning, before time or space existed, God was there. That's because God is eternal. He has always been. There never was a time when God was not present.

And John was saying the same thing about the Word, about Jesus. He was also there at the beginning. However far back you go, before anything else existed, before this universe was made, before time began, Jesus was there. He has always been. He is eternal. So Jesus could pray in John 17:5: ["Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."](#)

b) He is Fully God

It leads us to the only conclusion, that as John said, ["The Word was God."](#) John 1:1 Right at the start of his gospel, John makes this startling claim. The Word, who became flesh and made his dwelling among us, Jesus Christ, was and is God.

This is an unambiguous declaration of the deity of Christ. Yes, he is fully human. But he is also fully God.

Now, I know that there are some, like the Jehovah Witnesses, who try and avoid this truth by claiming that this phrase should actually say that the Word was a god. But apart from this being a deliberate mistranslation of the Scriptures, it is also completely inconsistent with the rest of John's gospel. Again and again, John will make it clear that he believed in the

full deity of Jesus.

In this gospel, we'll read seven "I AM" sayings of Jesus:

- "I am the bread of life" John 6:35
- "I am the light of the world." John 8:12
- "I am the gate." John 10:9
- "I am the good shepherd." John 10:11
- "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25
- "I am the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6
- "I am the vine." John 15:5

In addition, there are also seven "I AM" statements where Jesus deliberately used this phrase. For example, "Before Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58

In each of these Jesus was using the covenant name of God. In the Old Testament, when Moses met God at the burning bush, he asked God what his name was. God replied: "I AM WHO I AM." Exodus 3:14 This is the name Yahweh. It declares that God is the "I AM", the eternal self-existent one, that he doesn't depend on anyone else and that he is never changing.

And so through these seven "I AM" sayings and seven "I AM" statements, Jesus was claiming to be God!

And this wasn't a subtle claim. Many of the Jews recognised what Jesus was claiming. Some actually picked up stones to kill him because since he was claiming to be God, they thought he was guilty of blasphemy.

But others understood Jesus' claims and accepted this incredible truth. And so near the end of this gospel, Thomas saw the last of the seven miraculous signs, the proof of Christ's resurrection, and responded with the declaration, "My Lord and my God" John 20:28

c) He Is In Relationship With God

But although John declared that Jesus is God. He could also write that Jesus is in relationship with God: "The Word was with God." John 1:1.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity here – that God is Father and Son and, as we'll see later in this gospel, Holy Spirit. They are all equally God and yet also distinctly three persons and they have forever been in relationship with each other. "He was with God in the beginning." John 1:2.

If you don't really understand this, then don't worry. I don't think any of us do. But what John does is help us to see the triune God in terms of his work. And so in this gospel, John will describe how God the Father has sent his Son into this world to save us, so that we can receive the gift of the Spirit and come into a living and loving relationship with himself.

d) He is our Creator

But in our passage this morning, John sticks with the beginning and says about the Word: "Through him all things were made." John 1:3

This is another clear declaration of the deity of Christ. Genesis 1:1 says that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And the rest of the chapter describes how God spoke this world into being through the power of his word. But this Word, the one through whom all things were made, is actually Jesus.

There are some people who deny this. They say that Jesus is not the ultimate creator. Instead he is the highest of all created beings, an angel through whom God created all other things.

But John wanted to make sure that we didn't fall for that lie. He added here, "without him nothing was made that has been made." John 1:3 Every created thing in this universe, everything without exception, has been made by Jesus!

So this is what John wants us to realize – that Jesus is none other than our Creator God! Or as Paul puts it in Colossians 1:16: "By him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

e) He is our Life

And as our Creator, Jesus is the source of life. "In him was life." John 1:4 This is true in the physical sense. Without him,

nothing would be alive and nothing would be able to stay alive.

The writer of Hebrews says that: [“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”](#) Hebrews 1:3

But this is also true of real spiritual life. He is the only one who can introduce us to the Father and can bring us into life in all its fullness. And so in his first epistle, John wrote: [“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”](#) 1 John 5:12

f) He is our Light

And when we come into the experience of this life, then we come into the light: [“that life was the light of men.”](#) John 1:4 This is another one of the key themes of John’s gospel. As we were thinking about on Christmas day, Jesus came to bring the light of his presence, his revelation, direction and salvation into our lives.

Again, this points back to the Genesis 1, where the first act of creation is when [“God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”](#) Genesis 1:3

And this is what the gospel is all about: [“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”](#) John 1:5. Jesus, the ultimate source of life and light has come into this world darkened by sin and death and Satan. But the darkness has not understood the light, or as the alternative translation says, the darkness has not been able to overcome it.

Yes, in this gospel, we will see the dark forces resist the light of Jesus. They will do everything in their power to stop people from seeing the light and coming into the life it offers – but they will not be able to frustrate its power. Despite all that Satan and the powers of evil will do, in fact through all that they do, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ will shine out!

3. Our Response

So this is the one John wants us to fix our eyes on this year. This is Jesus: the eternal Word of God, fully God, equal with the Father, our Creator, the only source of life and light.

a) Listen To Him

So he is the one we need to listen to. That’s because Jesus is not just a good man or a great teacher, or one of many inspired prophets. He is God’s ultimate and final word to this world: [“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”](#) Hebrews 1:1–2

The truth that Jesus will present to us in this gospel will never be superseded, improved upon or upgraded. Jesus is still the Word Of God to us today.

b) Trust in Him

Secondly, he is the one we need to trust in. Because he alone is fully God and fully man, he alone can bridge the gap between us and God. He said, [“No-one comes to the Father except through me.”](#) John 14:6.

c) Focus on Him

Thirdly, he is the one we need to focus on. Because he is the source of life and light, then he is the only one who can lead us in the light and fully satisfy our hearts. Jesus said, [“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”](#) John 10:10. The best life this year, is a life focussed on him.

d) Worship Him

And lastly, he is the one we need to worship. Because he is our Creator and Saviour, then he deserves all the honour, worship and thanks. If we will grasp who Jesus is and what he has done, then the only proper response is to do what Thomas did and fall on our knees in worship and declare: [“My Lord and my God!”](#) John 20:28

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