

In the beginning

John 1:1-5

Beloved, one of the most debated topics in all of Christendom stems from the question WHO is Jesus? And conflicting answers to this question have echoed throughout history. Ancient Gnostics taught that Jesus was a spirit who only appeared to be human... The Arian heresy said that He was a creation of God... Islam has reduced Him to a mere human prophet... Much of medieval Roman Catholicism represented Him as a harsh king, only approachable through mediators... and then if we fast forward to today... the sad reality is that heresy and error have multiplied. Theological liberals claim that He is mainly a myth... while neo-pagans seek an affirming spirit guide... or now even an interdimensional alien. Popular songs seem to present Him as an imaginary friend who always guides us away from trials. And sadly, many others seem to know His name only as a curse word... But when we come to the Scriptures, we very quickly learn that He was infinitely more than a prophet... a good teacher... or just a godly man. And His name is to be revered and worshipped. C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* wrote the following... and please bear with me because I will quote this section often, "I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus Christ: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to." So... who did Jesus claim to be? Who does the Bible say He is? Beloved, He is God in the flesh. In the gospel of John chapter 10 Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" ... claiming equality with God. And in John chapter 8 Jesus says, "'Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!'" ... claiming pre-existence, an attribute of God. And not only that Jesus applied a name for God to Himself—I AM. Other biblical clues that Jesus is God in the flesh include Thomas the disciple's declaration to Jesus, "My Lord and my God", and note that Jesus does not correct them. The apostle Paul describes Jesus as "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" ... and the apostle Peter says the same, calling Jesus "our God and Savior".

And then we come to the section of Scripture we will be focusing on this morning ... In which the apostle John introduces both his Gospel and the Saviour of the world in a way that points to Christ's very deity ... and the very important fact that He was with God from the very beginning. And so we will be looking at John chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 in two parts today ... first in verses 1 and 2 we will be looking at Jesus Christ, the eternal God... then in verses 3 to 5 we will be looking at Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe.

John chapter 1 verses 1 to 3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

Jesus Christ, the eternal God. As we come to the opening of John's gospel, he opens with two very important concepts ... and both of these show John's assumption that readers would have a working knowledge of the Old Testament. The first is John's description of Jesus as the Word of God ... Word being translated from the Greek term LOGOS ... and in using it John would have made chords resonate in the minds of a variety of his readers ... touching a range of cultural and philosophical contexts. Then when we come to the opening phrase '*In the beginning*' ... in which we can see a direct link to Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 which says, "In the beginning God created..." And as an important side note it might be helpful for us to understand that Jewish readers would refer to the books of the Bible by their opening words ... and so '*In the beginning*' was shorthand for the book of Genesis. And '*the Word of God*' is seen in Genesis by God's very means of creation ... God said ... and it was ... The Word of God is God Himself in His act of creation ... As Bruce Milne says, "In the Old Testament the Word of God is God in His powerful and effective action in creation... deliverance... and judgment. It is the Word of God who gives understanding to the prophets concerning the mind and will of God." As it is written in Psalm 33, "For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth." So beloved, we need to understand that Jesus Christ shares God's eternity ... for though He came to us a man to die on the cross for our salvation ... He never stopped being very God! Jesus is the eternal Word of God ... He and the Father are ... and anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father ... A.M. Ramsey said, "God is Christlike and in Him is no unChristlikeness at all." The God who speaks in the Old Testament ... Who entered into a covenant with His people Israel ... Who inspired and moved the prophets ... was none other than the God known in Jesus Christ ... God has not and will not change or evolve ... Jesus Christ has always been at the heart of God ... and as His word says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." And so we cannot deny that Jesus is one with God ... He is God the Son ... One in the Godhead with the Father and Spirit ... there is no distinction in essence between God and Jesus ... both are equal ... and are to be equally honored and worshipped ... Jesus, the Son, cannot be separated from God, the Father, or the Holy Spirit ... and quoting R.V.G. Tasker, "the Word does not by Himself make up the entire Godhead, there is more to the Godhead than either the Father, or the Son We need great care in using 'more' here since Augustine taught centuries ago, 'no two persons are greater than any one person'; the Father plus the Son is not greater in deity than the Father alone, or than the Son alone, since both, and both Together with the Spirit, are one Godhead. At this point we confront the profound mystery of the Trinity and apprehension moves imperceptibly, but delightedly, into adoration." Beloved, Jesus Christ alone is God come to us ... no one can stand alongside Him ... and no one can take His place ... In Jesus Christ we have the final revelation ... He shares in the infinity and limitlessness of God ... and He must always be in the centre of our approach to God ... our thinking about God ... and our relating to God ... and because Jesus shares in the very nature of God ... we are called to worship Him without ceasing ... obey Him without hesitation ... love Him without reservation ... and serve Him with all obedience and joy ... for His glory and honour should be at the heart of every believer. Because Jesus was there in the beginning ... One with the Father and the Spirit ... co-equal and co-eternal ... One God ...

John chapter 1 versus 3 to 5 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe. John now asserts the intimate involvement of the Word in the creation of the world ... and please note that he does not specify how this relates to the origin of the universe scientifically ... his point is rather that Christ is shown by His being the creative mediator of the observable universe. Beloved, Jesus is the unifying principle at the heart of all existence. Stephen Hawking ... the sadly misled scientist wrote, "The eventual goal of science is to provide a single theory that describes the whole universe." Well from a Biblical perspective we have the answer already... the theory is a person ... It is Jesus Christ ... for through Him all things were made ... and without Him ... nothing was made that has been made ... Beloved ... we must understand that it is impossible for nothing to create something ... for from nothing ... comes nothing ... but from the Word ... from God Himself ... came everything ... and this can be seen in the unqualifiable dependence of all things upon the Word of God ... for He is the Author and Sustainer of all things ... and we can see it even in non-believers ... whether they like it or not ... if they do not worship the one and only God of the universe ... they will find things in this world to worship ... they will build up idols ... they will worship the created over the Creator ... Bruce Milne says, "John's point is that it is through Jesus alone that all things exist, whether physical planets or spiritual hierarchies. He towers above all and cannot be reduced to one of a series, whether as a stage in the process of human evolution or in the history of human ideas. Since Jesus is fully divine, He cannot be reduced to an intermediate state... and since He is a person He cannot be dissolved into an idea." And so it was through Jesus that all things were created ... and it is through Jesus that we have life ... as Acts chapter 17 says, "'For in Him we live and move and have our being.'" And Jesus is the light of the world ... for in Him and through Him we are able to withstand the trials and temptations of this world. He is the light that guides our every footstep as we pilgrim through this fallen world... knowing that in Him ... the victory has been won ... Satan stands no chance ... darkness will never overcome the light. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father having conquered death and set the repentant sinner free from the grip that sin once had ... as Jesus said, "'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

And I conclude this morning's sermon with the lyrics of worship song I really enjoy ... It is called 'Ancient of Days' and is sung by CityAlight. "Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one King reigning over all. So, I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. None above Him, none before Him. All of time in His hands. For His throne, it shall remain and ever stand, all the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name. For my God is the Ancient of Days. Though the dread of night overwhelms my soul, He is here with me, I am not alone. Oh, His love is sure, and He knows my name. For my God is the Ancient of Days, none above Him, none before Him, All of time in His hands. For His throne, it shall remain and ever stand, all the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name. For my God is the Ancient of Days. Though I may not see what the future brings, I will watch and wait for the

Saviour King. Then my joy complete, standing face to face, in the presence of the Ancient of Days.
None above Him, none before Him, all of time in His hands. For His throne, it shall remain and ever stand.
All the power, all the glory, I will trust in His name. For my God is the Ancient of Days... **For my God is
the Ancient of Days**"

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