

The Invitation is Delivered in Person

Jesus is the Center

Greatest Hits Series (John) – Part 1

John 1:1-18

January 11-12, 2025

Introduction

- Greatest Hits Series - Launching new series this weekend. Jesus said, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*¹ We are going to study some of Jesus’ greatest teachings and invitations of His earthly ministry captured in the Gospel of John. Each week we will study them closely to see what God has for us.
- Caution: Head vs. Hand – wanting God not just what He brings to us.
- Many great invitations but ultimately they all lead to ONE...

Jesus IS the Invitation

- Why did the Son of God, Jesus Christ come to earth?
 - New Adam – true humanity in full obedience (not Adam nor Israel)
 - To Save us from our Sin Problem (substitute sacrifice) – God-Man able to do what we could not do for ourselves. Took our punishment.
 - A Concrete, Tangible Example to follow – Jesus showed us how to live here on earth with a heavenly identity on a day-to-day basis.
 - Invitation to Relationship - Jesus came as God’s invitation to relationship. Part of Jesus coming to earth was to invite us to know the Father better and have a greater relationship with our Creator. Have you taken advantage of this invitation?
- The Gospel of John – who is he and when did he live? What’s the point of his gospel? How does that color how we read things?
 - Who? – the Gospel of John is written by one of Jesus’ 12 apostles, John the son of Zebedee and brother to James. He is one of the ‘sons of Thunder’. He was one of the fisherman families that Jesus tapped into. His mom (Salome) came on the ministry journey with all the guys (along with Mary Magdalene & Jesus’ mom Mary) and both parents funded the ministry significantly (they were likely wealthy with the fishing business that had multiple boats). John was given care of Jesus’ mom Mary when He died on the cross. Tradition says that he lived the longest, was the ONLY apostle not to be martyred, and cared for Mary until her death in the city of Ephesus where he either traveled from, or died there later on. He was famously exiled for his faith to the prison island of Malta where he received the apocalyptic visions that became the Book of Revelation. He wrote not just this gospel, but also 1st, 2nd, 3rd John and Revelation.

¹ Jn 8:31–32

- Why? – There are four gospels or stories of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John. The first three are called ‘synoptic’ which means ‘similar’. They cover a lot of the same ground and same stories. Reading through those is like reading 3 different perspectives of the same timeframe. John, however, is the odd-man-out. He writes about different stories and different things, although there is some overlap. It’s worth asking why he wrote a gospel at all after three similar accounts. The only thing we have to go off for intent/motivation is the long-held tradition that John’s disciples forced him to do so. He didn’t want to, the story goes. He resisted it for a long time but they begged and begged. He only relented when they agreed that he would cover additional information and stories and write more about Jesus’ later ministry time. If any of this is legit, we don’t know.
- Focus? – John’s focus seems to be more on Jesus being a miracle than anything else. He is the one that focuses on Jesus being God in the flesh. He is the only that focuses on the mysteries surrounding Him and the complexities of the Incarnation (God coming to earth in the flesh). You will see more quotes that link Jesus to God here in this gospel, than any other.
- Deep Yoda-John – Unfortunately, no one is more YODA sounding than John. **He clearly got it from Jesus, his best friend and role model, but even Jesus didn’t sound as odd as John.** For whatever reason John feels the need to make things sound **dramatic** and that obscures some things (in my opinion). **And the statements that he makes that we can understand, are really bold, very black and white, and can cause a lot of confusion if they are taken in isolation.** Therefore, any studies in John need to be done with extreme care and held in context. He is not an easy one just to read through. It doesn’t help that the Greek used in the book is sloppy and doesn’t read smoothly either.
 - Why these terms? – John is going to use some metaphors and illustrative terms to explain things about Jesus. He is going to use words like Word, Life, Light, and stuff like that. It’s not an accident. **He is starting his book the same way that Genesis starts: the Beginning.** In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In Jesus there was a new beginning and beginning of eternal life (a different sort). This means that John will use terms in the original creation story: Word, Life on earth, let there be light, etc. and use it now of Jesus. To me it seems a little forced in English. Maybe it’s smoother in Greek (although John wasn’t a Greek scholar so maybe it was jumbly there too).
- A Gentile-Friendly Jew – John was a Jew and raised Jewish. He was not a particularly educated guy (fisherman by trade). This caused him to take extra time to explain things to people like himself who didn’t understand all the religious jargon. As fancy as he talks and writes, he will take time to explain non-Jewish things to non-Jews, which we Gentiles appreciate.

Lesson

- God-Man

- Jesus is God
 - John 1:1-3 – *“In the beginning was the Word,² and the Word was with God,³ and the Word was God.⁴ ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*
 - In the beginning was the Word, - This is a very famous passage with theologians and Bible scholars. The Greek word for ‘word’ is **logos**. The term means, **“expression of intelligence”**. It is commonly used of **something very important to communicate. It’s tied to reason and rationality meaning Truth. In the Old Testament** the Preincarnate Christ/**Messiah** was referred to as the logos, along with terms like Sophia/wisdom; Son of Man; Word of Jehovah, etc. **Jesus was/is the EXPRESSION of Yahweh, the visible one, the communicated Person, the disclosed essence of God. No one has seen Yahweh, but Jesus is the fullest expression on earth that we can get.**
 - Visible Version of God – Jesus is the visible form/Person of God. Mankind cannot see the fullness of Yahweh without dying. In the Old Testament it was the 2nd Person of the Trinity (who we know now as Jesus) that anyone saw when they ‘saw God.’ He was ‘THE Angel of the Lord’ and has always been the Commander of the Army of Yahweh. When this 2nd Person of the Godhead entered into humanity it further allowed Him to morph His form into a something that people could see and engage with. When He died on the cross and was raised again, this 2nd Person of the Trinity received honor, glory and the personal title of King of Kings and Lord of Lords above all creation.⁵ Everything having to do with mankind was directed under Jesus’ feet as grand supreme. Although the Father and Holy Spirit were involved, it was the 2nd Person who went through all the misery of coming here and the one that secured the salvation for mankind. He alone was donned the title of Sovereign over all creation. I know it’s weird to honor one person of God differently than the others but

² “For “the Word” (Logos) see Additional Note A, pp. 102–13. The introduction of the term as something familiar in the very first line of the Gospel brings before us one of the difficulties that will remain with us throughout. It is not proven beyond doubt whether the term, as John uses it, is to be derived from Jewish or Greek or some other source. Nor is it plain precisely what he meant by it. John does not tell us, and we are left to work out for ourselves the precise allusion and its significance. Again and again we will find ourselves in this situation. I do not mean that John’s thought is confused or that we cannot follow what he is saying. On the contrary, his thought is clear and his style lucid. But his combination of simplicity and profundity often leaves us wondering whether we have caught all his meaning.” Leon Morris, NICNT commentary

³ ““The Word was with God” is probably as good a translation as we can manage for a difficult Greek expression. If the preposition is to be taken literally, it means “the Word was toward God.” John thinks of no opposition between the Word and the Father. The whole existence of the Word was oriented toward the Father. Probably we should understand from the preposition the two ideas of accompaniment and relationship. That the thought is of importance and is no casual expression is indicated by the fact that the statement is repeated in verse 2. It marks an advance on the previous statement (cf. also 1 John 1:2). There John established the personal existence of the Word. Now he goes on to the Word’s personal character in relation to the Father. Not only did the Word exist “in the beginning,” but he existed in the closest possible connection with the Father. The expression does differentiate between the two. Perhaps John is by implication refuting any idea that the Word is an emanation from God, quite distinct from the Godhead. The Word and God are not identical. But they are one.” NICNT

⁴ “He says “the Word was God,” not “God was the Word.” The latter would have meant that God and the Word were the same; it would have pointed to an identity. But John is leaving open the possibility that there may be more to “God” than the “Word” (clearly he thought of the Father as God, and his later references indicate a similar status for the Spirit). But he lays it down unequivocally that nothing less than “God” will do for our understanding of the Word.” NICNT

⁵ Phil 2:9-11

that's the whole point of the complexity of the Trinity (individual persons and personalities).

- John 1:18 – "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."
- 1 Ti 6:14–16 – "...until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen."
- Col 1:15–20 – "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."
- Philippians 2:9-11 – "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
- Other times Jesus is called the WORD – John uses the same name 'Word' in Revelation 19:13. The author of Hebrews also uses it of Jesus.
 - Rev 19:11-16 – "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."
 - Heb 4:12–13 – "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."
 - 1 Jn 1:1–4 – "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."
- and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. – And so here we are with John's initially cryptic phrase, but now after all that study (and the Trinity study below), makes so much more sense now. The 2nd Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, as a Person of God is both God and with God

(holding those two identities in tandem). Jesus is God and Jesus was with the rest of God (Father, Holy Spirit, at least).

- He was in the beginning with God. – in order to explain that Jesus is no mere human being John goes out of his way to explain over and over that who Jesus really is (2nd Person of the Trinity) is eternal and was there at the beginning of all creation. He is no mere man.
- All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made⁶ – The Father initiated creation and all of it was done THROUGH 2nd Person (we now call the Son). The logos was the person who created with creativity and make life happen. The Father spoke, the Son created, the Holy Spirit ordered. In case anyone would argue Jesus Christ's supremacy, John again says that, 'all things were made by Him, nothing wasn't.' John is doubling down in case any bad theology would sneak in and say that Jesus was less than He is.
- Trinity Issues – it's impossible to study this passage and not address the elephant in the room: namely, the Trinity. **There is perhaps no more confusing and complex concept about who God is than this.**
 - What's the Trinity – the Trinity is a **CONCEPT**. It's not a word used in the Bible. It's a way of describing something about God that is very complex. **It is saying that God is a multi-person being.** What does that mean?
 - One God – the Bible couldn't be more clear that there is only ONE God. It's part of what the Jews were supposed to memorize and pray three times a day in the **Shema** based on Deut 6:4-5 (when God revealed to Moses what He is like and how He should be talked about). **Whatever we mean the Trinity to be it CAN NOT mean that there are multi gods. We are not polytheists**, like Hinduism or Paganism, **we are Monotheists** and believe in one God.⁷
 - Three Persons⁸ – the complication comes in when the Bible is also very clear that **three separate entities, or persons are referred to as God**. They are famously known as the **Holy Trinity**: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Each separate personality and being is called God and operates as God. So how can you have ONE God but THREE persons of God?** Well, that's why we made a new term called the Trinity.

⁶ "He does not say that all was made "by" him, but "through" him. This way of putting it safeguards the truth that the Father is the source of all that is. The relation of the first two Persons of the Trinity in the work of creation is of interest. There is a careful differentiation of the parts played by the Father and the Son (1 Cor. 8:6). Creation was not the solitary act of either. Both were at work (and, for that matter, still are; cf. 5:17, 19). The Father created, but he did it "through" the Word." NICNT

⁷ The reason why Muslims consider Christians to be bogus and sinful is that they believe in the Trinity concept, that the Muslims believe to be polytheistic (Muhammad was given a false explanation of Christianity in the beginning and assumed that it was God, Mary & Jesus, which it's not. But even later, it smells like polytheism to them, and the untrained nose so they reject it claiming that the ultimate deity is ONE, and only ONE – oddly enough we agree on that just a different ONE. Theirs is Allah and ours is Yahweh). The reason why the Jehovah's Witness started was partially due to a return to the ONENESS of God movement and denying the Trinity claiming that it was a bastardization of scripture. They believe that there is only One God and therefore there is no evidence in their Bible (edited to say so) that Jesus claimed to be God or that the Holy Spirit is a separate entity. Obviously we disagree and our bible scholarship is better.

⁸ I am not convinced that God is limited to three persons at all, only that He has chosen to only reveal Himself to us in three persons. There is nothing demanding a limitation to three. I think that it's a more utility-based decision. God is infinite and there's far too much to Him.

- God is not like us or from here – we need to realize that although we are made in the image of God and He is the Creator of all things that we see that seem relatively cohesive and similar, **He is not a part of our world, any more than an artist is within His painting.** He is not limited by what limits us like time & space. He is all-together different. Therefore rules that we live by don't apply to Him. For example, we all have a beginning, and all of our stuff has a beginning because there was a time when it wasn't. No matter how old you argue the universe is, no one argues that it doesn't have a beginning. But God is eternal. He doesn't have a beginning nor an end. All of that reality is within our universe/reality bubble. Therefore **to describe God to people is complicated. He exists in a different dimension where different things are possible and real. The best we can do is say, 'it's kind of like...' So, that's what we do.**
- The problem with kind-of-like – the problem with using phrases like, 'kind-of-like' is that **it's not exactly right, ever. Which means there are holes in any analogy.** Any metaphor or illustration I would give you of how God is and operates, will eventually fall apart under greater scrutiny. Therefore, **in the end we have to be content with the basic explanations that the Bible provides. Which are:**
- The Basics – **three AND one.** The popular term we use of **God** (Elohim in Hebrew) tends to be used as the all-encompassing term of the divine entity that we worship. The personal name of that divine entity that created and maintains our reality is **Yahweh.**⁹ The persons are **Father, Son & Holy Spirit.**
 - The Father is God – **the Initiator of all of our reality, the creator God, the God of Abraham,** Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph, the God who decided to make us and runs our universe we call Father (thanks to Jesus making us children of God).
 - The Son is God – It's no more clear than in the gospel of John and the more you read it you can't unsee it. **Jesus Christ claimed to be God, operated as God, did things that only God can do, and provided plenty of proof to this reality.**
 - In what sense is Jesus a 'son?' – this concept has always fascinated me. Jesus is called the son of God but in almost every case in humanity, son indicates lesser. Of course it's not. I am not a lesser person than my dad. But when we talk about 'kids' it seems to be that another has caused them to happen, was prior to, has authority over. And here is why the term 'son' fits so well with the 2nd person of the Trinity.
 - There was a time when the 2nd Person of the Trinity was not 'a son' – I believe that **the title and identity of 'son' is not**

⁹ A name revealed to Moses for the purpose of identification to the Israelites. It means, 'I am', meaning 'I am whatever I am and cannot be limited to anything in your reality.' It's why one of the 10 commandments is not to make any image trying to encapsulate all of the nature of God in the tangible.

eternally backwards for the 2nd person of the Trinity. He wasn't always a son. He became a son when He shifted into the Savior role. When Yahweh decided to launch one of His persons into humanity (Incarnation), the launch was done from one Person (the Father) and the 2nd was 'sent' so in that sense the sending one, the initiator became the Father-figure and the sent one became the Son-figure. While in humanity, the Father gave directions to the Son who obeyed wholeheartedly thereby giving practical authority to the Father (1st Person). A father is also known as a 'source'. The only missing component of obvious Father/Son relationship is the 'existing prior to.' All three persons are co-eternal backward and forward. They have always been God together (Yahweh). There was no time that the Father was alone and 'birthed' the Son in a traditional way. That can't be with an eternal being. However, when the role kicked in, the title shifted, and the new relationship dynamic began, thus 'begetting a son.' The author of Hebrews refers to this citing Psalm 2:7. Clearly it's talking about Jesus (all those descriptors are used of Jesus in different places). Yahweh said, 'you are my Son, today I have begotten you.' That is the reference to, and I paraphrase, a concept of, 'today, I have sent you and you have become the emissary of Me. As I send, I will tell you what you should do on earth. You are now the One who goes for Us.'

- Psalm 2 – *“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” ⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” ¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”*
- The Author of Hebrews explains it more – He is explaining how unique Jesus is above all angelic beings. He cites that Jesus is a being of which Yahweh referred to Him as Son, and the description that Yahweh uses of Him and the roles He fulfills (worshipped by angels, heir of all things, vehicle for creating the world, the glory of God, exact imprint of His nature, upholding the universe, purifying sins, etc.)

demonstrates that He too is God. Nevertheless the phrase 'today I have begotten you' is used again to explain that the Son role was once He was sent by the 'Father'. Interestingly he also highlights some of the same concepts that John was talking about (how the world was created).

- Heb 1:1-14 – *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." ⁷ Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." ⁸ But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." ¹⁰ And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹² like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." ¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?"*
- How and why a Firstborn? – multiple times in Scripture it says that Jesus Christ is a firstborn. In what sense is that true? If he BECAME a SON at one point and was sent into the world (Incarnation), then **He is the FIRST of humanity to be glorified, purified.** He started like Adam but Adam didn't rise again yet (Jesus hadn't died and risen Himself). Therefore **the first to rise as humanity glorified was Jesus Christ. He was not only the first to be sent from heaven to earth, but the first to rise from earth to heaven. In all those senses he was first-born.** The term firstborn (Gk: *prototokos*) is better translated 'preeminent.' That concept of Jesus is talked about in Romans 8:29 'firstborn among the brethren', meaning the greatest and highest of humanity. The firstborn son would inherit from the Father and we, as children of God, get to 'share in the inheritance of the Son.' Additionally *prototokos* means 'supreme'. Jesus is the Creator of the world, not a member of it (Col 1:15). Yet, as Creator, He is the SOURCE of all creation (first cause), and

ruler of all. He is referred to as the firstborn of the dead (Col 1:18), which combined with the Greek word *Proteuon* means that he has the inherent right to be ruler, and was the one to lead the rising from the dead. It's also used in Heb 1:6 and Rev 1:5.

- Only Son – The famous passage of John 3:16 explains that God/Yahweh (the fullness of all of God) determined that a **Person of God (2nd Person) would go down into the world** (incarnation). **No other person of God came in the same way** (the Holy Spirit was sent but not into humanity – through a womb - but with humanity), thereby **Jesus is the ONLY Son. His role was 'Son of Yahweh'.**
 - Jn 3:16–18 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁰
- The Holy Spirit is God – Again and again **God is described as the Holy Spirit** but then it says the Holy Spirit OF God, which clearly indicates He is distinct and individual as well. The Holy Spirit is with God and is God.
 - With and Is God – this is the same thing that we just read above. It said, "the Word/Jesus was WITH God and WAS God."
- Each is distinct and individual – like the famous story of **Jesus' baptism** where we have the Son in the Water, the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and the voice of the Father from up above coming through, we know that **the three Persons of God, can operate relatively independently and seem to interact with mankind with nuance and uniqueness.**
- Each has a different role – the most obvious element of the difference between the three Persons of the trinity is their unique roles. **The Father initiates, the Son Manifests, and the Holy Spirit organizes. The Father loves, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. The Father handles big picture, the Son handled the redemption directly and the Holy Spirit is still managing the day-to-day.**
- The Best Analogy – the best analogy is to look at your hand and realize that if you stuck your fingers through a series of holes in a paper you could move them independently and they would look unique from one another. But yet, they are part of the same hand. You only have **one hand**. If you saw the whole hand it would make

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Jn 3:16–18). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

more sense, but since you only see the **three fingers** it seems separated.

- The important elements – the most important elements to remember when talking about God’s nature and how the three persons, one God works are these:
 - Same Mind & Heart – **there is NO disagreement** between the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. They are of one mind and heart and in absolute unity as they are **ONE GOD**. **There is no disruption, no opposing thoughts**. It’s like dealing with One Person at all times. Whatever you tell the Holy Spirit, the Father and Son know and vice versa. The fancy theological concept is: One Essence, Three Persons. They are **inextricably fused** in all ways that matter.
 - Individual relationship dynamics – since **the three Persons interact with human beings in different roles and ways, there is room to have relationship with all three rather uniquely**. Although God understands if we fumble through and only talk to One member of the Trinity, there is a beauty to realizing that each member is fascinatingly different and desires closeness with us. There is an opportunity to know God more by knowing more about how He operates in this world.

- Light & Life

- Jesus is Light and Life

- *John 1:4-5 – “In him was life,¹¹ and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*
- In him was life, - here is that **tie in to Genesis**. Just as life began as Yahweh created at the start of this universe, so too did Jesus, the 2nd Person of the Godhead begin to **make life anew through His time on earth saving mankind**. In Jesus was all that was necessary for creating eternal life reality in mankind. **He was the source of all that we needed. He was the essence of life.**

¹¹ “Life is one of John’s characteristic concepts: he uses the word 36 times, whereas no other New Testament writing has it more than 17 times (Revelation; next come Romans with 14 times and 1 John with 13 times). Thus more than a quarter of all the New Testament references to life occur in this one writing. (135). “Life” in John characteristically refers to eternal life (see on 3:15), the gift of God through his Son. Here, however, the term must be taken in its broadest sense. It is only because there is life in the Logos that there is life in anything on earth at all. Life does not exist in its own right. It is not even spoken of as made “by” or “through” the Word, but as existing “in” him. There is probably a characteristic Johannine double meaning here. The life of which John writes is in the first instance the kind of life that we find throughout this earth, but this will call to mind that spiritual life which is so much the more significant that John can speak of it as “the (NIV, ‘that’) life.” Neither will be out of mind here. This Gospel constantly associates life with the Word. He came that people might have life and have it more abundantly (10:10). He died so that people might have everlasting life (3:16). He gave his flesh for the life of the world (6:51). Only those who eat his flesh and drink his blood have life (6:53–54), and similarly only those who come to him have life (5:40). When he gives life people perish no more (10:28). He said that he had power to lay down his life and to take it again (10:18), and he did just that. As Lord of life he raised Lazarus from the dead (ch. 11). Twice he said that he is “the life” (11:25; 14:6), a thought to which we are very close in the Prologue. The basic source of all life is the Father, who “has life in himself” (5:26, where see note). But the Father “granted the Son to have life in himself” (5:26), and it is this latter point to which attention is directed here.” NICNT

- and the life was the light of men¹² – Now we are mixing metaphors with life and light (again tying into Genesis narrative). John’s point is that the essence of life that Jesus brought with Him when He came to earth was **the solution to all the darkness and sin that had invaded this planet and ruined stuff**. It was not just a solution IN the darkness, but a new reality where the light shines in and creates a different atmosphere.
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. – This hope, this light, **this eternal life reality came bursting into our universe and it began to chase out the darkness, the evil, the sin**. The sin didn’t overwhelm it with its load, but it was so powerful that the darkness had to flee in front of it. Jesus came in hot with power and exploded in our universe making goodness and life.
- Light Proclaimer
 - John the Baptist Led People to Christ
 - *John 1:6-9 – “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”*
 - There was a man sent from God, whose name was John¹³ – Again, it’s confusing here because a dude named John is talking about another guy named John and they are both important people in the Bible (can anyone please name their child something unique?). This character that John’s introducing is **John the Baptist**, the forerunner of Jesus.
 - He came as a witness,¹⁴ to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. – John the Baptist’s whole purpose was to **get**

¹² “John is preparing the way for the thought that he will develop throughout his Gospel, that Jesus is the life-bringer and light-bearer. Just as John links life with Christ, so he links light with him. Christ is “the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5). He has “come into the world as a light” (12:46). Anyone who follows him “will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (8:12). People can be urged to believe in the light (12:36), just as they are urged to believe in him. And just as he who is life gave life to dead Lazarus, so he who is the light of the world gave sight to the man born blind (ch. 9). The first recorded words of God are “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), and in this chapter the Word is the source of light. All the light we have, whether we walk in it or turn our backs on it, we owe to the Word.” NICNT

¹³ “It is curious at first sight that there should be this mention of John the Baptist in the Prologue. There is no difficulty about his appearing in the narrative sections, but it is certainly perplexing to find him in this brief introduction to the Gospel as a whole. It may be that the answer is to be found in the prominence accorded the Baptist by some of his followers. While the Gospels depict him as pointing people to Christ and as regarding his whole mission as that of a forerunner, it seems that some of his followers did not accept this assessment of their leader. From the beginning some wondered whether he was the Christ (Luke 3:15). And as time went by it seems that some of his followers preferred to keep themselves aloof from the Christian movement, regarding John as a more important figure than Jesus (“Just as a man, overcome at the sight of dawn, would not deign to look at the sun”). Some had baptized in John’s name as far afield as Ephesus (Acts 19:3), and they may have gone further. The great Apollos is first introduced as one who “knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). Our author does not enter directly into controversy with such people, but he insists more than any of the other Evangelists on the subordinate place of the Baptist. One of the aims of this Gospel plainly was to show how clearly and consistently John had pointed people to Jesus. Apparently the movement associated with the Baptist’s name was particularly strong in the region where this Gospel was written. If, as seems probable, the author of the Gospel came from the group originally centered on John, his interest in his former teacher would be natural. This interest would not be lessened by the fact that John’s was the witness borne to Christ by the last of the prophets of the old covenant.” NICNT

¹⁴ “In this Gospel there are seven who bear witness to Jesus. Each of the three Persons of the Trinity does this—the Father (5:31–32, 34, 37; 8:18), Christ himself (8:14, 18; cf. 3:11, 32; 8:37), and the Spirit (15:26; cf. 16:14). The works of Jesus bear witness (5:36; 10:25; cf. 14:11; 15:24), as does sacred Scripture (5:39; cf. 5:45–46). A sixth witness is John the Baptist, while seventh is the variety of human witness consequent on the ministry of Jesus, that of the disciples (15:27; cf. 19:35; 21:24), the Samaritan woman (4:39), and the multitude (12:17). This emphasis on testimony should not be minimized. Testimony is a serious matter and the means of substantiating the truth of a matter; there is a legal air about it. It is clear that our author wants his readers to take what he writes as reliable. He is insistent that there is good evidence for the things he sets down. Witness establishes the truth.” NICNT

people ready for the Messiah to walk on the scene. His job was to get them to pay attention to the bad news of their sin and their inability to make it right, so that when Jesus started talking about salvation they would know their need and they would be thankful.

- He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. – John the Baptist never tried to take the Messiah title, he didn't want it, nor was he built for it. He was the PR prep guy. He wasn't the Savior. He was not the light chasing darkness back. He was the one who talked about the light-bringing, Jesus.
 - Who are you pointing people to? – JTB pointed them to Jesus even to his detriment. Who are you pointing them to? When they leave you are they more impressed with you or Jesus?
- The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. – Jesus was the true light, not a false light, not a failing light, but the essence of what it means to be pure, holy, good, alive. This power of salvation is what can give light to every human. JTB talked about how Jesus was on His way to bring hope and help into the world.
- Hidden in Plain View
 - Jesus Came Into the World to Transform People
 - John 1:10-13 – *"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*
 - He was in the world, - The 2nd Person of the Trinity, God Himself came to earth and dwelt with us. He was in our reality in a very special way. He took on humanity and entered our universe tangibly. He CAME HERE.
 - Php 2:5-8 – *"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*
 - and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. – This is the world, the universe, the reality that was made THROUGH Him. In other words He was a part of the creation process (along with the Father and Holy Spirit). He was the energizing force reality that made all things that we know. He came here to His very personally shaped reality but wasn't recognized. The artist wasn't recognized by his art. The architect wasn't known by his architecture. The parent wasn't recognized by the child. They/we couldn't even recognize when our source is standing right in front of us.
 - He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. – this is a direct reference to the Jewish people. God made a covenant with Abraham to do primary dealings on earth through his people group. But

when God came in the flesh (Incarnation), to His own special people, the very people who were waiting for Him, they didn't receive Him but rejected him. **Why did they reject Him? Because He didn't come in a way that fit their narrative that they had conceived and bought into. They ceased to listen to God's narrative and concocted their own.**

- But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,¹⁵ - But to the Jewish PEOPLE (not the guiding leadership, who rejected Jesus), to the Gentiles, to all those who DID accept and acknowledge Him as Messiah, Lord and God...**to those who believed Him to be who He said He was...**
- he gave the right to become children of God, - **He offered them a new reality as children of God. He gave them a new identity.** He died for their sins and washed away the old them and transformed them into something new (purified humanity). He made them, like God, children of God, formed into the image of God. They are not gods by any means, but they are now like their Father. They now have access to God and all His resources.
- who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. – These believers were transformed into something totally different (all old things passed away. All things became new). They were remade not by being physically reborn through a human womb, not by some type of physical transformation, not by the decisions of humans, or a parent, but were **personally recreated by God, who had created them in the first place.**
- Word Becomes Flesh
 - Jesus Came in Glory
 - John 1:14-15 – *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*¹⁵ *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)*
 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, - Revisiting the initial point that John was making, he makes it most clear here: **This 2nd Person of the Trinity, this member of the Godhead, this creative Word/logos that makes life, fused into humanity through Mary's womb and the impartation of the Holy Spirit, and took on humanity (became flesh).** He was so human, so physical, so tangible, that he lived among us for a time on

¹⁵ “Notice that they are to believe “in his name.” The “name” meant much more to people of antiquity than it does to us. For us it is a mere appellative, a convenient label whereby we distinguish one person from another. We ask “What’s in a name?” and answer (with Shakespeare) “that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” The name for us is a matter of indifference. Not so in the ancient world. There it stood for the whole personality. When, for example, the Psalmist spoke of loving the name of God (Ps. 5:11), or when he prayed, “may the name of the God of Jacob protect you” (Ps. 20:1), he did not have in mind simply the uttering of the name. He was speaking of all that “God” means. The name in some way expressed the whole person. To believe “in the name” of the Word, then, means to trust the person of the Word. It is to believe in him as he is.⁸³ It is to believe that God is the God revealed in the Word and to put our trust in that God. This is more than simple credence. It is not believing that what he says is true, but trusting him as a person. It is believing “in” or “on” him.” NICNT

earth. He made his temporary home here with us so we could be with Him.

- and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son¹⁶ from the Father, - This is the weird phrase in this passage and I'm not sure I fully understand it at first glance. John seems to be saying something really deep here. What it speaks to me initially (before study – which I will do and enter it below¹⁷) is that Peter, James, and John were given a pre-glimpse of the glory of Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration when He shone like the sun. But later all the apostles (sans Judas) were able to see the risen Lord ascend into the heavens right in front of them, so perhaps that counts. **Glory is that which is wondrous about someone and makes them look good** (that can be internally, externally, perceived, etc.). It's what makes people honor them. It's a realization of their greatness. **Jesus' glory was revealed when people realized that He was God incarnate.** He had a special honor in His role as Son of God.
- full of grace¹⁸ and truth¹⁹ – Jesus' nature that made everyone so impressed to glorify Him was primarily regarding not just His nature as God but the nature of being full of grace (charis) which is **a goodness that pours out on others without regard for self-benefit.** And also people were stunned into silence and respect as He spoke the Truth because they knew that **it wasn't earthly wisdom but heavenly.** He spoke about reality as if He knew all things. He shared **what was ultimately right and good.**
- John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'" –

¹⁶ "We should not read too much into "only begotten" (see mg.) To English ears this sounds like a metaphysical relationship, but the Greek term means no more than "only," "unique." It is used, for example, of the widow of Nain's "only" son (Luke 7:12; cf. also Luke 9:38). It is used also of Jairus's "only" daughter (Luke 8:42). Perhaps even more instructive is the use of the term with reference to Isaac (Heb. 11:17), for Isaac was not Abraham's only son. But he was "unique." He was the only son given to Abraham by God's promise. Used here, though the word does not necessarily denote a metaphysical relationship, it does at the least show that Jesus is God's Son in a unique way. No other is or can be the Son of God as he is. The unique character of the relationship between the Father and the Son is one of the great themes of this Gospel." NICNT

¹⁷ "That John had in mind the Shekinah and the glory that was associated with it seems further indicated by the express statement that the glory was "the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father." The verb "beheld" is invariably used in John (as, for that matter, in the whole New Testament) of seeing with the bodily eye. It is not used of visions. John is speaking of that glory which was seen in the literal, physical Jesus of Nazareth. Since he came in lowliness we have an example of the paradox that John uses so forcefully later in the Gospel, that true glory is to be seen, not in outward splendor, but in the lowliness with which the Son of God lived among us and suffered for us. John holds, it is true, that the miracles showed the glory of Christ (2:11; 11:4, 40). But in a deeper sense it is the cross of shame that manifests the true glory (12:23–24; 13:31). The repetition of the word "glory" emphasizes its reality. The true glory was there, in the earthly life of the Word. And it was seen." NICNT

¹⁸ "Grace" is one of the great Christian words, and it is a minor mystery that John uses it three times in his Prologue and not again throughout his Gospel. The word basically means "that which causes joy," and so means "winsomeness." It comes to signify "goodwill," "kindness," and the like, often with the notion that the favor shown is undeserved. In the Christian understanding of things grace is especially seen in God's provision for our spiritual need by sending his Son to be our Savior. From this we get the thought of the good gifts that God bestows on those who are saved, and finally that of the attitude of thankfulness that people ought to have toward God for all his goodness to them. Nowhere do we see more clearly what the grace of God means than in the Word made flesh." NICNT

¹⁹ "With this John links "truth." This is another important Johannine word. It is found twenty-five times in this Gospel, so that it is clearly a topic in which John is deeply interested. We usually understand truth simply as the opposite of falsehood, and John may use the term in much this way (e.g., 8:45). But for him the term has a much wider meaning. Like "life" and "light," with which we were dealing earlier, truth is closely linked with Jesus. He could even say, "I am ... the truth" (14:6). For the richness of this Johannine concept see Additional Note D (pp. 259–62). It is plain that for John truth is many-sided and many-splendored. When he speaks of the incarnate Word as full of grace and truth he is pointing us to the fact that truth and the complete reliability of God are bound up with one another. Truth as he sees it is not basically something that can be known apart from God. The Word is the revelation of truth as well as of grace. Grace taken by itself may have given people an unbalanced picture. Not only is God the God of grace. He is that, but he is also the God who demands of his people "truth in the inner parts" (Ps. 51:6). They must "do" the truth (3:21)." NICNT

John the Baptist knew that Jesus was special. He was very vocal about who Jesus was. He called out loudly to anyone that would hear that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for, for hundreds and thousands of years. John explained that he was no mere man and in fact as much as people respected JTB for telling the truth, John said that he wasn't even worthy to do a slave job for the glorious Jesus (untie His sandals). Jesus is God and was therefore here and part of everything that mattered long before mankind came into existence.

- Grace & Truth
 - Jesus Brought with Him Grace and Truth
 - *John 1:16-17 – “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*
 - For from his fullness – From Jesus' nature (grace and truth) and His gifts, as the fullness of God here on earth...
 - we have all received, grace upon grace. – **Every person on the planet now has POSSIBLE access (all received) to God through Christ. This means that no one MUST be doomed.** It's not because we deserve it, quite the opposite, we are wicked and rebellious people, but because He is so loving and grace filled. He lavishes us chance upon chance, blessing upon blessing, to be set free from our sin and received by God and to have eternal life.
 - For the law was given through Moses; - Moses was the one that God used to deliver His law to the Jewish people (and thereby the world at large). This was **the rules system that would allow mankind to align with God's intentions and will.** The Law was a code to follow **to keep a relatively healthy connection with God** until the sin problem had been dealt with. The Law was **a series of behaviors listed that bring judgment.** As wonderful as it was (God didn't have to say anything about how to connect with Him and just let mankind die), it highlighted our sins and **brought condemnation** (we were then without excuse and couldn't claim ignorance).
 - grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. – In contrast to Moses (whom the Jews held in highest regard), Jesus Christ came to bring grace and truth that would further reveal what the law was here to do and then point to a better way through Him. **The second covenant was far greater than the first.**
 - Deity on Display
 - Jesus is the Visible Version of God
 - *John 1:18 – “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”*

- No one has ever seen God²⁰ - No one has ever seen **Yahweh in His fullness**. It's impossible. Our capacity would blow out instantly. We cannot comprehend or process a being of that infinite magnitude. Therefore God would always remain unknowable unless He accommodated Himself, and gave us a portion of Him that we COULD understand. Thankfully He did.
- the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. – **Yahweh sent us a portion of Him**, one Person of Him, who is still fully God (all members of the Godhead are full deity), who works in conjunction with the Father (who the Jews were most familiar with – citing equality), and that is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. When He came, this was **the clearest understanding we have ever had to what Yahweh is like**. Jesus is the exact representation of Yahweh in human form. We never have to guess the intentions of God because Jesus made them practically available.

Conclusion

- Jesus came as an INVITATION to RELATIONSHIP – **Have you responded to this invitation? All of these beautiful and powerful things we talk about only apply to those who have surrendered to Christ and allowed Him to be their Savior.**
- No other way – the Bible is clear that there is no other pathway to all that God has, except through Jesus Christ. This means that it's **Him or nothing**. If there's ANY saving happening by any means, it's Jesus at the core of it. No one else can. Only He is able.
- More than an invitation to fix stuff – If you are just hearing about all of this, one thought is filling your mind: how do I fix my problem? And yes, I am giving you that solution today. But I want to sow a thought into your heart that will make so much more sense later in your spiritual journey: **The greatest gift is connection and relationship to Him, even more than fixing our sin and damnation problem. He's the big deal, not what He can do for us.**

²⁰ "The emphatic declaration, "No one has ever seen¹²⁴ God" (notice that the word "God" is in an emphatic position) is in line with the words of the Lord, "no one may see me and live" (Exod. 33:20; cf. John 5:37; 6:46). Yet there are other passages that explicitly affirm that some people have seen God (e.g., Exod. 24:9–11). What then does John mean? Surely that in his essential being God has never yet been seen by people. Some had their visions of God, but these were all partial. The theophanies of the Old Testament did not and could not reveal God's essential being. But Christ has now made such a revelation. As Calvin puts it, "When he says that none has seen God, it is not to be understood of the outward seeing of the physical eye. He means generally that, since God dwells in inaccessible light, He cannot be known except in Christ, His lively image." NICNT