

Easter 2025 - John 1:1-5 (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, a very good morning to you. I didn't manage to hear the welcome, so at the risk of redundancy, I want to extend a warm welcome to you all.

! We are grateful that the Lord saw fit to bring us together this morning to praise the resurrected Christ. A couple of weeks ago, we began a study through the book of John.

It's our normative habit to go verse by verse through books of the Bible. And so, this morning, we will look once again at John chapter 1, verses 1 through 5.

I hope that it will become apparent to you why in just a moment. So if you would, please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 1. I'll read the first five verses. Before I do, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good that we might believe its promises, obey its commands, and have affection for its author.

[1 : 12] May we hear it and respond accordingly to it. 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 was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. In the opening words of John's Gospel account, he introduces Jesus to us without His name.

In fact, he won't write the name Jesus until verse 17 of chapter 1. In the first five verses, John introduces to us Jesus with three titles and two characteristics.

Number one, Jesus is the Word. That's a title, a name given to Him. Number two, Jesus is preexistent, a characteristic.

[2 : 23] Number three, another title. Jesus is the Creator. Number four, a characteristic. Jesus is self-existent.

And then number five, and lastly, Jesus is the unquenchable light. The name light, and I'm adding unquenchable to it.

We spent our time together last week considering the first four of these points, and I saved the last one for today. I think you will be able to see now why this is a good text for resurrection, Lord's Day. But before we tackle this last point, bear with me as I make some introductory and summary comments. First, it is good for us to contemplate Christ.

We fill our minds with so many things coming at us, 100 miles an hour, and many of them are fleeting and pointless.

[3 : 29] To set our minds on Jesus, the Jesus revealed to us in the Scripture, not some Jesus of our own imagination, is always of great benefit.

The Puritan John Owen wrote in his book entitled, *The Glory of Christ*, the following, which I read to you last week. I think it's worth another read. Quote, The revelation made of Christ in the blessed gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness than the whole creation and the just comprehension of it, if attainable, can contain or afford.

He said, thinking about Christ and the glory of the gospel is better than anything else we could understand. Quote, Without this knowledge, the mind of man, priding itself in other inventions and discoveries, is wrapped up in darkness and confusion.

This, therefore, deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and our utmost diligence in them. For if our future blessedness shall consist in living where he is and beholding his glory, what better preparation can there be for it than a constant previous contemplation of that glory as revealed in the gospel?

That by a view of it, we may be gradually transformed into the same glory. I love this idea of a constant previous contemplation.

[5 : 08] The Christian eternity will be filled with the wonderment of Christ. So we should seek to know him now that he might be exalted in our minds and in our lives.

Second, let's take a brief tour of the first four points made from this text, either as a reminder to you or just as a way to get us to the fifth point, if you're new with us to our study.

Number one, Jesus is the word. We see this in verse one. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

Greek philosophers use this word, word, to refer to the abstract principle of reason and order in the universe. It's the Greek word, logos.

It was an unknown source of creation and wisdom. So John, in this opening verse, presents Jesus as the personification of creative power and reason.

[6 : 09] John's Jewish readers knew that God spoke the world into existence with mighty words, that he made covenants with his people with words, gave them wisdom through the written law, again, words, counseled prophets and kings, and revealed the scripture through spoken words.

So John introduces Jesus as the incarnation of divine power and revelation. John, in introducing Jesus as the word, draws straight lines to his divinity.

The condescension of Christ is a great wonder. That Jesus should humble himself to take the form of a man in order to suffer his father's wrath for our sin should captivate our minds.

And I'll say that his incarnation should not be divorced from his resurrection. Secondly, Jesus is preexistent, a characteristic.

We see this in verse two and on into the beginning, I'm sorry, verse one and on to the beginning of verse two. The word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

[7 : 24] Jesus, John tells us, as God was in the beginning in both of these verses. This Greek word means source or origin and refers to time before the universe began.

The verb was in the imperfect tense describes continual action in the past. So, verse two could be translated, he was always being in the beginning with God.

These two verses in no way suggest that Jesus was created, but that he just is. He has always existed.

Paul writes in the first part of Colossians 1 and verse 17, Jesus is before all things. Incredible. Pre-existence. No beginning and no end. Thirdly, we see Jesus introduced as the creator.

[8 : 31] We see this in verse three. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. Just to be clear, John tells us, everything was made and nothing wasn't made without him.

Jesus Christ, John tells us, is the creator of all things. Everything we can see and everything that we cannot see were created by him. What opportunity we have to set our minds on the creator Christ as we go about our days.

This past week has just been beautiful to be outside and to consider Christ made this. The entire universe was created by him and it was created for him.

To what end? We thought about some of this last week. For his praise. We can read Psalm 19, verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Pay attention to all that has been created and be in awe. Fourthly, Jesus is self-existent. The beginning of verse 4 says, In him was life.

[9 : 54] Ontology is the study of the nature of being. The beginning of verse 4 is a brilliant ontological statement. In him was life.

The word translated life is used all throughout John's gospel and always refers to spiritual and eternal life. Jesus possesses within himself life.

This is sometimes referred to as his aseity. It's from the Latin. Jesus is of self. Everything that has been created needs some power source to sustain it.

creation cannot sustain itself. Not so with Jesus. He is self-existent. His divine nature needs no inputs to go on.

No fuel. No energy input. Always existing. Never created. He just is. Everything in the universe is becoming, it's moving from one state to another.

[11 : 06] Jesus is. These realities demand our attention. You must do something with this, Jesus.

John means for us to pay attention that our minds and affections might be fixed on him. So, brief summary of last week.

I hope that you are with me in the contemplation of Christ. So let's proceed to spend the rest of our time together on the final way that John introduces Jesus in these opening words, in this prologue of his gospel.

So the fifth point of this part one and two, Jesus, is the unquenchable light. It's a light that does not get put out.

The last half of verse four, right? The first half says, In him was life, and the life was the light of men. In verse five, The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[12:13] The themes of life and light are prominent in John's gospel. Here we see the two clearly connected in a metaphor that speaks to the contrast of Jesus against all that is evil in the world.

The word light appears 24 times in this book, seven of those times in chapter one. And because we will spend the coming weeks in chapter one, let's step out of it just a bit to see the theme further in John's writing.

So, in John chapter eight, in verse 12, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

In chapter eight, verse 12, Jesus calls himself the light of the world and teaches that our pursuit of him and his ways, what is often called our walk, will not be in the darkness, but in the light.

Here, Jesus so clearly reinforces the connection that John makes between life and light with the phrase, the light of life. The word translated life is used all throughout John's gospel, and as I said before, refers to spiritual and eternal life.

[13:40] How are these themes to be understood? Let's take a stab at it. Light by its very nature causes darkness to scatter.

Darkness, in fact, cannot be quantifiably measured. It is merely the absence of light. We take light for granted in our day, but if you lived in a time when the only source of light was from a flame, this metaphor would likely have a more felt impact for you.

Darkness and light, significant theme, even for survival, if it's not a plenty. Where there is light, there is not darkness.

darkness. The two are opposites, and one has expulsive power over the other. This week, I very proudly taught my computer the word expulsive.

If we back up a bit in John 3, we can see this idea at work in the negative. So join me in John 3, verse 20. There Jesus says, For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

[15:12] Wickedness is associated with darkness in this text, a darkness that does not want the exposure of light. Wickedness produces shame, and it produces death.

It is the opposite, the antithesis of the light of life that we saw in John 8, verse 12. Let's press the metaphor just a bit further and clearer.

Note especially who the light is. I am saying that John introduces Jesus as the unquenchable light in verses 4 and 5.

Jesus says in chapter 8, in verse 12, that he is the light of the world. And now in John 11, verse 9 and 10, Jesus there says, Are there not 12 hours in the day?

If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him.

[16:27] I suggest to you that the stumbling that Jesus here refers to is not a slight trip, that's the way we tend to use the word stumble, but a stumble that causes one to fall headlong and to not rise again.

Verse 10 says that the person whose life is characterized by wickedness is dead because Jesus Christ, the light, is not in him.

Okay. So this is where the theme develops. It's where it works itself out in the book of John. But let's go back again to where it starts with all of that in our minds.

Verse 5 of chapter 1, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Perhaps this metaphor of Jesus as light set against darkness now lives more vividly in your mind.

Now here's the astounding thing about verse 5. There's a very good chance that John 1, verse 5, has become my new favorite verse after spending the past two weeks in it.

[17 : 45] John, in this great economy of words, has in mind the incarnate Jesus, the crucified Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, and the reigning Jesus.

With some understanding of what he means, developing this theme of light, he has all the good news of Jesus packed into these 13 words.

It's 13 words in my English translations. It's 13 words in the original language. The whole gospel packed in right here in this one verse.

Let's walk through all that is explicit and implicit here. Firstly, the incarnate Jesus. Verse 5, the very beginning, the light shines in the darkness.

God become flesh, right? Comes into the world to illuminate it. Look at the verses that follow. Verse 5, this is verse 6 and following.

[18 : 59] There was a man sent from God whose name was John. Not the same John that authored this. This is the John who we often call John the Baptist although we would do well to say John the Baptizer to ease confusion.

Verse 7, he came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him, the light, Jesus Christ. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

We understand this to be John's introduction, the incarnation of Christ, him becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us.

And then verse 14, this is where that gets developed further. John goes back to the word title and writes, 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.

The light shines in the darkness. We see here the incarnate Jesus. We also see, secondly, the crucified Jesus and the resurrected Jesus.

[20 : 16] All of that packed into the last part of the verse. And the darkness has not overcome it. The darkness doesn't win over the light.

before I say anything else about this phrase, I want to address a quick translation question. Some of you may have a translation that says, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The Greek word can mean to grasp in the sense of understanding or to seize in the sense of capture. So it carries that idea with it.

I think the did not comprehend translation is looking to the rejection of Jesus as the Christ in verses 10 and 11 and throughout the rest of the book.

It's a theme that's developed, the tragic rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people. And that makes it a fair word to use. Many good translations use the word comprehend.

[21 : 19] But I think it misses the overall thrust of John's prologue. I'm quick to pick on the English standard version, but not in this case.

I am so very happy that it's rendered in the ESV and the darkness has not overcome it, has not seized it, has not won a victory over it.

Satan plotted through the intentions of evil men to see Jesus laid in the grave. Peter says in Acts chapter 2 verse 22 and following, Men of Israel, hear these words.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. We imagine the enemy thought he had won the final victory as Jesus suffered crucifixion on the cross. But Satan is not omniscient and could not prevent God's mighty intentions in the death of his son.

[22 : 38] Never be mistaken, the death of Christ was the greatest crime in all of history. Jesus was entirely innocent.

But it did not occur outside divine providence. I have a dear friend who many years ago served time for some drug with intent to distribute charges and the entire case was fabricated against him.

Like people witnessed against him that he had never even met. and I asked him, I said, did it not just make you so mad? They said, well, the system makes me mad, but I was totally guilty of the crime.

Like, I was entirely guilty. They just had to fabricate a case against me. He had done the things that he was convicted of doing, just wasn't done in the proper way.

Not so was Christ. Entirely innocent, not guilty of anything at all, and yet crucified. And this did not happen outside of God's providential work.

[23 : 50] Listen to what Jesus says of his death and following resurrection in John chapter 10. This is part of verse 17 and into 18. He says, I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority. The darkness thought, it had overcome the light.

On Friday afternoon, Jesus, the light of life, was laid in a dark tomb. But on Sunday morning, oh, on that most amazing of Sunday mornings, the light burst back onto the scene.

The darkness has not overcome it. We will do well at this point to read John's account. of the resurrection.

So please turn with me to John chapter 20. Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

[25 : 12] So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, this is John, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.

For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

[26 : 28] They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where, they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her, Mary. Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbani, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, peace be with you.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, peace be with you, as the father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

[27 : 55] And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. That must have been an agonizing week for Thomas. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you.

Then he said to Thomas, put your fingers here, and see my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe. Thomas answered him, my Lord, and my God. Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[29 : 21] So, it's an astounding thing there, like the whole summary of John's letter given to us, the purpose of it, right, these things written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life, right, the light of life in you, in his name.

And just before that, right, he has said, verse 29, Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Beloved, that's us.

Those of us who have placed faith in Christ and have not touched his hands or put our hand at his side and yet have believed. We are called here blessed.

And that's why we gather today. We are gathered today by faith to worship the risen Christ.

We gather every Lord's Day to worship the risen Christ. The light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

[30 : 29] It has been ordered that we should do this. We are slow learners and we are quick to forget. The risen Christ needs to be constantly held up in front of us.

All the promises of God find their yes in him and the resurrection is the guarantee that he is who he said he is. He is in fact the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

The church since its founding has done this, this regular gathering on the Lord's Day. It's the reason we gather on Sunday because it's the day that Christ was risen to see and pray and preach and hear and sing the good news of the victory of Jesus Christ.

Last week I read to you what I think I said was the second verse. I think it was actually the third verse in a song written by Charles Wesley.

It's been sang by the church throughout the ages called, And Can It Be That I Should Gain? This verse, I won't tell you which verse it is because I'm going to get it wrong, it's on the back of your bowl.

[31 : 42] And he wrote this, Amazing love, How can it be that thou, my God, should die for me?

But the story does not end with the resurrection. We keep church calendar days, I think largely for cultural reasons, but there are many other significant things that happen in the life of Christ that we don't give special days to.

How about his ascension? Right? Third point is the reigning Jesus. This is part of this darkness not overcoming the light.

After 40 days, Jesus ascended and is presently at the right hand of God the Father where he rules over all things.

The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3, Jesus Christ 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.

[33 : 17] After making purifications for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Paul says in Romans chapter 8, he is there interceding for us.

He's praying on behalf of his people. Paul adds to this in Colossians chapter 1, verse 15 and following, Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

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.

And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. 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, to think excellent. For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[34 : 34] Right? Jesus reigns over all things now and he is working to build his church. A church that he is building on the truth that he is the Christ.

A guaranteed church. The gates of hell will not prevail against. The darkness is still working to overcome the light, but it will not.

And John has this in mind. The church, under the lordship of Christ, by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit, goes on and it goes out in order that we might gather people for the praise of the light.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Let's pray together. Thank you.