

# The Lordship of Christ

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Date: 22 March 2015

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. And they're trying to see if they can adjust and try to be back in the population again.

So that's the reputation of care. Change is not often a welcome thing in the Department of Corrections either. You know, things have kind of been laid as they are, and we kind of like it that way, and, you know, we'll go as we go, and some things will be quicker than others.

So it's not a fast-moving process. When I first got there in 2008, two-thirds of the yard was gang affiliate, which made for kind of a really hard place to penetrate because the gang leaders are the ones who call the shots.

And so even as they'll say, yeah, I like Jesus, but at the same time, they're going to do what the gang leader tells them to do. Now, some of that got broken up in 2008 because we had a really bad situation between a couple of the gangs.

There were actually about five people who were life-flighted out of there as a result of it. But that put the place in a total lockdown for a long time. And lockdown means just what it sounds like. You know, they don't come out.

[ 1 : 30 ] They come out for showers. Basically, sack lunches are delivered to the cells. And so it's not a real pleasant situation. This was in June, and it went through the summer. The cells are not air-conditioned.

So I think you can even start to imagine how unpleasant that could become. So in the middle of that, there was no church because there is a lockdown. And lockdown means all activities to cease. So I figured out a way to try to make that work because they didn't want people coming out of the various units because they don't want them mixing together. Then the thought came, well, could I maybe go to the day room of each unit?

And I thought I might get my head snapped off when I went to the chief of security at that time. But actually looked at me and goes, you know, that may not be a bad idea. And so I took it to the ward and he said, that may not be a bad idea.

So that's basically how my ministry started there, was going into the day rooms. So you'd have the same message. You'd run it about six times on six different nights, sometimes two, three a day.

[ 2 : 28 ] And when we first got there, you know, a Sunday attendance was maybe 15, 20 people. One of those rounds on the day rooms, after about three or four of those, it was about 120 combined that had come out for everything.

So that's more or less how the niche got established. And once we came out of that, the crowds were a lot better. Now, it's not because I did anything ingenious. You know, it's the power of the spirit at work.

And it's Jesus moving through that yard. And it has continued to do that. You know, some come, some go, some fall, some stick. You know, it's a high casualty area. That's, again, just kind of the nature of the beast.

But positive things do happen. There was one night we did a communion service. See, they don't have air conditioning. They don't have heat in the day rooms there either. And it was one night, it was December.

It was eight degrees. And it still had about eight guys out there. And they sat through the whole thing. And I was even telling them, you know, if you need to do jumping jacks or something, you know, to kind of keep the blood flowing, that's fine.

[ 3 : 27 ] You know, do what you got to do. And that included me. You know, it gets to the point of trying to turn a page. Your fingers were shot. You know, you couldn't even do it. But, again, they stayed through all the way.

And so the result on the back end of that was the Lord moved. And now a lot of people were involved. And we had actually had a church where there was none before. Now, one thing you have to understand, it's kind of a, oh, the environment that's there, it's not a Southern Baptist church that I'm running.

You can't do that in that type of a scenario. But it is God's church. And so the denominations are basically left at the door as you go in. They don't need to hear all that stuff. Because here's kind of what you get there.

You got someone's coming in on Monday saying, oh, no, you're not reading the King James. No, you're going to hell because you're not reading the King James. And then someone's going to come in on Tuesday and say, oh, no, you're not speaking in tongues. You don't really have a spirit because you're not speaking in tongues.

And then someone's going to show up Wednesday and say, oh, no, you weren't baptized right. You know, you got to do it this way. And so then you get by the time you're Thursday or Friday, they're going, you know. And I've heard people say, it seems like everybody comes through.

[ 4 : 30 ] They're really opinionated. And they've all got their kind of thing. And you're going to hell if you're not doing their thing. And finally, they say the heck with it. So that's why you got to really check that at the door. They need to hear about Jesus. They'll sort all that out later.

They will. But first, you got to get the gospel into them. The verse I often quote, 1 Corinthians 3.11, there is no foundation laid other than that which is already laid in Christ Jesus. If they walk out of there and they got that, I like a chance.

If they don't, I'm going to see them again. That is both my personal and professional experience. But God does move. And he moves strongly. And even in these areas where, you know, it seems so dark.

And yes, it can be a dark place. And if you're not believing in spiritual warfare, you better start before you go walking in there. Because there's places you walk in, you can cut it with a knife. But God moves.

And God overcomes. The light overpowers the darkness. And people's lives do change. And so you may never see more evil. But at the same time, also for those who now get it together, you may not see more good.

[ 5 : 29 ] Because they're doing it right in the teeth of the devil's plate packer. They're doing it right with the opposition that's coming all the way around the circles. And it basically goes something like this. It's got its 31 flavors.

Oh, so look at you now. Now you're the holy man. After all the things you've done. Now you're carrying that Bible around. Where was all that when you were out there doing what you were doing? What, you think that's going to save you now?

Well, the answer to that, yeah, it will. And they're right. Should have been doing it a long time before. But it's never too late. So always be careful. You know, a lot of times it's looked at as a prison.

It's kind of a throwaway. They're out of sight, out of mind. Get them out of our face. We don't have to deal with them anymore. Well, I've got news for you. Most of these guys are coming back.

They're going to be your neighbors. They're going to be mine.

And so how do you want them coming back? You want them coming back when the gospel introduced? You want them coming back having some discipleship that's been put into them? Or you want them coming back even more ticked off than they were when they got there?

[ 6 : 27 ] That's what it comes down to. No, there's only a handful of them that are going to be there forever. But even still, God moves. When I worked death row in Arkansas, there was an understanding.

When guys got off the row, they knew why. It was the guys who had been sold out for Jesus. It was the guys who had given their lives to God. Everybody knew that. It was kind of the unspoken, dirty little secret that was there.

But God does move. Even the life of one that you'd think you'd thrown away. When you start talking in terms like that, you know, that someone's beyond redemption, well, you know, there may have been a day some folks are saying that about you too.

Think about it. I know they were saying it about me once. Let's just say I wasn't always the chaplain. That's a long story for another day. But never, never too late.

No one is ever beyond the reach. And we have a desperate need for people to come in and disciple these guys. Guys, a solid biblical training. You know, I mean, we need people to disciple, to get people into small groups, work them together.

[ 7 : 28 ] Because what you're doing is when you raise up one there, they're going back out to their housing units. And they're going to be talking to other people who won't come to the church. It's kind of like a house church idea that you may have heard going around. They'll come to a barbecue.

They'll come to, you know, your house for a fellowship or something like that. They'll come over to watch a ball game, you know, after the Bible study. But they won't come to the building. You get that same type of thing there. So when you raise these folks up, they're going back into their units. Illustration of what I'm talking about. B.J. Steele donated us to Experiencing God and Mind and Christ books. So you have some leaders in the various housing units who have taken those, and they've run a Saturday morning group with it.

I think DNF was running about 14. I think G&J; was running about 17. So these are guys who've met every Saturday morning. Gone through, studied, grown. They've been disciplined through that. These are guys, you know, who would not have come to church before. Some of them are now coming. A real great story came out of one of those because there was a youngster there. His name was Dustin. He's a handful.

[ 8 : 28 ] You know, he's the one that could really kind of, you know, he's 21, 22 years old. Do-do-do-do-do-do-do. You know, he's like, it's almost like he's on a, you know, he probably would have put him on Ritalin or something if he'd been out.

You know. But he's like buzzing around and driving people crazy. And he was about to get a new cell. So he was kind of nervous about that. Because sometimes, you know, you're locked in a cell with a guy like that. And you can, you know.

So he gets himself a soup. He gets the guy, you know, a drink for, you know, kind of something to offer him when he comes in. And he got a Bible and left it on the bunk. So the guy comes in. Turns out he's a Christian.

Turns out he had his money. He hadn't arrived yet because he'd come from the county jail. He had nothing. So that soup was a godsend for him. The Bible had a name inscribed on it. Bobby. Want to guess what the guy's name was?

Bobby Lemon. So it's amazing how God will work and God will pull things together. So yes, he makes the way where there is no way. Even in the darkness of a prison world.

[ 9 : 27 ] And some of these guys are going to come back and you'll be amazed how solid they've become. Because they don't have all denominational trends and all these things with them. Basically they learn, kind of like I did, right out of here. And that's what they need to learn.

It's right out of here. And all these so-called quirks and errors and things we talk about. If you're learning right out of here, those things will sort themselves out. But we don't need them when telling them, oh no, you're all wrong and you're all going to hell.

They hear that all the time anyway. And they hear that when they come back. Because that's the major need when they come back. Is what do they do when they come back? You know, some of these guys have no place to go. And so it kind of happens.

You know, the churches are afraid of them. And so now the next thing you know, they're back with homeboys. As soon as they hit the homeboys, it's over. You hear stories. They talk about the first six months maybe to a year being most critical.

That's not correct. It's the first five minutes. It's the minute they step out the door. Who are they going to be listening to? Who are they going to be associating with? You know, where are they getting their information from?

[ 10 : 29 ] That's going to set the pattern in motion. Now maybe it'll take six years, six months to a year to play itself out. And it'll all the way surface. But it was set in motion the minute they hit the door. So they need to have a place where they can go, where that continues.

There needs to be a bridge to bring them back out. And that's a bridge that so often isn't there. But again, guys come through. Guys make it. You know, in another day, maybe we'll talk about that, but I was one.

So yes, there is never too late. A life is never thrown away. What's happened is the devil has fooled them. They've gotten lost into the darkness.

And they haven't been able to find their way through. So yes, we do have a need. You know, if you have a spare time or you feel led, we need people to come in and teach some of these guys. The guys are coming to you. You know, they've pretty much already been broken.

You know, they're there looking. They're now understanding. Hey, you know, look around. This ain't working. You know, we've got to do something else. They are starting to get that by the point they've come down to see you. Because they're coming to see you.

[ 11 : 30 ] They're coming with their own volition. They're coming voluntarily. They have classes there they call for credits. I generally tend not to like those because for credits you have people there for the wrong reasons. But people do come.

And you'd be amazed what God can do. So with that, as we move into our message for this morning, one of the great questions mankind wrestles with is the one surrounding the origin of all things.

Now, we know we're here. Like, duh. Look around. Here we are. But how many wondered, how did we get here? Where did this all start? Where did we come from? All this stuff we see around us. Where did all that come from? And, you know, man's attempt to find answers apart from God to these questions has led, shall we say, to the development of some very interesting theories, most of which attempt to make man the master of his own faith.

So these are speculations that will go back through history, and they think we can figure everything out on our own. And these intricate theories and designs, they start tracing one thing back to another and then to another and so on down the line.

But we have a problem there. You cannot combine or continue backwards in time forever. However, things just cannot just keep tracing back to other things and what some people have called an infinite regress.

[ 12 : 42 ] Somewhere, someplace, that timeline has to stop. Somewhere, sometime, there was a beginning. So no matter how far you may want to dance with it, how far you want to go back with it, at some point, you're going to hit that wall, which is called in the beginning.

First cause of all things. The very beginning. It's claimed to be a mystery. By many. And the result of this seemingly endless search has been a world of confusion. The theories come and go.

Now what's accepted as concrete and scientific today, that could well be obsolete in the circular file tomorrow. And what many fail to understand, or perhaps it might be more accurate to say, refuse to understand, is that for all these intricate theories, man cannot trace back to the beginning of things by his own ingenuity.

And the sad part of this, it's not even necessary. The reality is, there is no great mystery you've got to unravel here. Because what man has tried so hard to figure out on his own, God has told us from that beginning.

There are two books in the Bible that open to the words in the beginning. One of those is the book of Genesis, which gives us the account of those beginnings. The other is the Gospel of John, which is where we'll be this morning, which takes us back to those beginnings.

[ 13 : 55 ] Now the Gospel of John is the more universal in nature than the other Gospels. John's intent was not so much to rehash all the events of Christ's life. I mean, there are three other Gospels that had already done that.

But still, he's coming with a new message. He's coming presenting the deity of all things. He's coming to address the significance of these events in the life of Christ. And his goal is to present Jesus Christ as the hope and answer for a lost world, which he does in every chapter.

Now John has also developed a reputation as a book of misunderstandings. The Gospel of John repeatedly speaks of how God presented himself to his world, but the world didn't get it.

They left to false conclusions because they didn't understand what was being presented. So they saw the signs, but even though they saw them, they would not accept them or him. The religious authorities, they felt threatened by him.

And even though the evidence was clear, the world could not bear that light shining into its darkness and would seek killing. And before we move into our Scripture today, just a point that seems to be made.

[ 14 : 58 ] There are those who want to claim, oh, you know, Jesus, he never claimed to be God. Yes, he did. John makes it clear that he did repeatedly. It's in every chapter.

And if you read through the Gospel, it becomes quite clear that Jesus did things only God could do. He said things only God could say. His business was the Father's business.

And he accepted worship that is only due God. And if you want to take this from a more practical standpoint, let's look at the reactions of the crowds. They knew exactly what he was claiming. No doubt about it.

No question whatsoever. Why do you think there were so many attempted trips to the rock pile? They knew exactly what he was claiming. So the issue is not whether the claims were made. They were.

The issue is how are you going to respond to those claims. And it's because John's theme is that it's the divinity of Christ, he takes us back to that beginning, back to before all things, to where only God existed, back to the eternal purpose of God from the beginning.

[15:59] The first 18 verses of the chapter, the first chapter of John, known as the prologue, make up an introduction that leads through the entire book. And these opening verses will create the basis for all that will follow it.

And in these opening verses, John makes the point quickly and forcefully that the eternal, infinite God who is before all things, who is the creator of all things, came to earth, becoming a man in the person of Jesus Christ.

So we go to John chapter 1 and verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Now the Greek term that's used for word is logos.

The logos that in Jesus Christ came into the world. And logos was not just an ordinary word. In Greek and Jewish thought, logos was the all-inclusive, rational principle and purpose of the universe.

[17:04] It was seen by Greek philosophers as referring to eternal purpose. It was seen as speaking to the purpose of all things. It spoke to that which was supremely great about the universe. It speaks to the very soul of that universe.

So this logos speaks to and declares the divine purpose of all that is. So realize, this is a term that had a very significant meaning in the Greek and Jewish world.

It was regarded as the agent for accomplishing the divine will of God. Logos was also understood as a creative force in addition to being the source of all wisdom. So we must recognize the powerful statement that is being made when John presents Jesus Christ as the personification of that logos.

That means Jesus is the incarnation of divine power, the incarnation of divine revelation. And in his first verses, it is stated without question that this logos existed from all eternity.

There was never a time when the word did not exist. That word was God himself. The entire Gospel of John must be read in light of that opening statement.

[18:16] The works and the words of Jesus are also the works and the words of God. He was here for the Father's business. There is no separating them.

John starts back at the beginning of the universe. As was noted earlier, these are the words that open both Genesis and John. Again, Genesis is a description of God's creation. John takes us back to that point in time to declare that this creation was brought about by the logos, by the very word of God.

This is not a creation carried out by some subordinate being. It was accomplished by the word himself. Without the word, nothing was made that was made. That means the word had to be in the beginning.

It had to be before all else. The word stands at the beginning of history as we know it, at the formation of the universe. There is nothing that does not depend on the word for its existence.

As the word existed before creation, the word cannot be created. The word is the creator. The word was with God. The word was God.

[19:22] The picture is presented of two equal members of the Godhead who were working in complete agreement. The word existed in the beginning as part of the Father himself. All that can be said about God also applies to the word.

The word stands above all things. The word is greater than all things. And the word is not bound by time. The word is the point at which all else began to exist.

The word is the creative agent of God which is responsible for the creation of the world. And that's why John opens the same way Genesis does. In the beginning. In the beginning means we are speaking of divine activity.

In the beginning means we are speaking of the work of God himself. The knowledge of God that the word brings. It's not merely some information that we stash away.

The word brings life. In Genesis we are told the account of the beginning of physical life. Now in John we're told that that same agent of creation the one who spoke this world into existence in Genesis has now come into the world to bring eternal life.

[ 20 : 32 ] And we're jumping ahead a little bit right now but when we get to verse 14 we're told the word became flesh to dwell upon us. That word belong to us is the creator and soul of the universe. That word is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was the intended impact of the words that John wrote here. To identify a supremely great being who created the universe as none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore the word is the source of life.

It is only because there's life in the Logos that there's life on earth at all. Life did not just happen as so many try to theorize. It was created and the word was the one who created it.

Throughout the gospel of John life is associated with the word. There is no life apart from that word and the word came to bring eternal life. Only God can bring eternal life.

Only God can give eternal life just as he alone gave life at the foundation of the world which Genesis records. It was Jesus Christ the creator and giver of life who is the light of mankind.

[ 21 : 40 ] He is the light from heaven who has come to shine into the darkness of this world to bring life to all who will call upon his name. Just as Jesus is linked with life he is also linked with light.

As God is the same in essence and cannot be separated from the word so life and light share the same elements. You do not have one without the other. Jesus is the source of life and that light shines in the darkness and here we have the first misunderstanding in the gospel of John because the world cannot comprehend that light.

standing over against that light we have the darkness. The struggle between light and darkness will be a constant theme when you read through the gospel of John. The darkness does not understand the light.

Now that's not because it can't. It doesn't understand it because it just does not want to. It does not care to. And the opposition will be bitter. So the contrast we see developing here is that the light that the Logos came to center, this world that Logos came to enter and to save is also a world that chooses not to believe.

Light opposes darkness. There can be no other way. Where the light shines the darkness must recede. And when darkness takes over it means the light is being pushed away.

[ 23 : 01 ] So it is the darkness in an attempt to avoid the light that does not want to recognize the creator. Because when a creator is recognized well guess what? That means we now have to submit to that creator.

And if we can fool ourselves into thinking that is just some old wise tale. There is really no creator. Well guess what? We have now just left ourselves free to live however we choose to live. And the only accountability that we will have is that we choose to allow ourselves to be accountable to.

And what we don't like we will just conveniently ignore and continue on our merry way. Sound like the world we are living in right now? Just a little bit? That is why the darkness tries so hard to figure out how to wait to write God out of the picture.

And when people make that decision and become committed to that course of action that is where the hardness of heart sets in. And that is when it becomes very difficult for the light to penetrate the darkness of those minds.

Again it is not that mankind cannot understand the light. Really the forces of darkness understand the light completely. That is why they oppose it so fiercely. If you remember and read through your synoptic gospels there was one group that always recognized Jesus immediately without anything in the way of introduction.

[ 24 : 13 ] You know what that was? It was the demons. Oh they knew right away hey whoa it is not time yet hold on wait a minute let us have the pigs okay? They knew right away what was going on when they saw him.

Forces of darkness also understand the battle is lost and they know the judgment that is going to be waiting for them and it is for those reasons they try to cover that light and it is for those reasons they try to choke out life.

But the light shines in the darkness and it continues to do so it always will. While the darkness may choose not to comprehend the light it is not able to overcome that light.

The word is victorious no matter the opposition thrown against it. Now these opening verses that we've just covered they serve to establish the deity of Jesus Christ. It is plainly declared who he is. Now there are two possible responses to that. You can choose light or you can choose darkness. You can believe or you can choose not to believe. But before moving into that John first introduces the one who came to testify of Jesus namely John the Baptist.

[ 25 : 22 ] So we go to verse 6 chapter 1. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all through him might believe. He was not that light but was sent to bear witness of that light.

Now as the Baptist himself said he was not the light. he was the one who was sent to prepare the way. This is the first time the word witness is used. The purpose of a witness is to establish the truth.

You'll see it again as you continue through John. It's important because it tells us what happened when the word came to the world and what is still true today because the word came into the world. The analogy is to a courtroom setting because what we're going to see is there's evidence being presented and brought forward that verifies the claims of Jesus and in time each and every person will be called upon to make their choice.

John the Baptist fully understood his divine calling. He went out of his way to point people away from him and to the light. Now there was a lot of fanfare when the Baptist showed up. Everybody was running out to the desert and wanted to see what's going on out there.

But he received them only to point them in another direction. The Baptist understood. He was the one who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. speaking of the one who would come before the Messiah.

[ 26 : 38 ] The Baptist had been chosen to perform the most important task of history. But for now, understand he's fulfilling the role of a herald. A herald was common in that era of history. Whenever a king was about to come into a town, a herald would enter into the town before him to prepare the way, to inform everybody who was coming, to make preparations for that.

The Baptist was the herald coming before the true king. He was not there to exalt himself, but he was there to witness to the light. He was not the light.

He claimed nothing in the way of privileges that belonged to the light. He was merely there to testify about the light. And the purpose of the testimony was that all through him might believe.

Still the purpose of a witness today. That's still what we're called to do. We are called to give this witness to the truth so that through our testimony, others will believe. This world is so steeped in darkness, there is no recognition of the light without a witness to point to.

You saw some of those things in the video and you wondered, gosh, are people really had never heard the name of Jesus? Well, I actually encountered that once in San Francisco when I was out there taking one of my classes at Golden Gate. I was talking to a lady one night, she'd never heard of the virgin birth.

[ 27 : 53 ] Most bizarre thing she'd ever heard. Had no knowledge of it whatsoever. Yes, these things are real. even the good old USA. So from here, John moves on to write of what the witness was, what it was to, the incarnation of the word and flesh.

In verse 9, that was the true light, which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him.

He came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in the name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now there's two things that should be leaping out to you in these verses.

First, the fact the word took on flesh, and he came to dwell among us. Second, most did have nothing to do with him. The true light, which came into the world, has reached out to everyone who has ever been in this world, whether they like it or not, whether they choose to acknowledge it or

not.

[ 29 : 06 ] Now the light can be refused, but it cannot be ignored. Now on our own, we do not seek after the light, we run from it. When you turn over a rock, all those critters under there, are they thanking you for this light that you just shined into their world?

I don't think so. What are they doing? No, they're scrawling to get away from it. They're trying to dig even deeper into whatever it is they're playing in down there. That's how mankind is too. We run from it.

Yet God still reaches out, just as he always has. He reached out to the point where he came to the world to live among us. And the whole world was and continues to be affected by this.

Whether one chooses to believe or not, there is no denying the fact that this incarnation of the word and the flesh has revealed himself to every soul. That has brought a light that has reached every person no matter how hard they might appear, no matter how far they may run.

The hardness comes from rejecting that light. The hardness comes from choosing to remain in the darkness. And this happens, quite frankly, because too many people prefer their lives of sin.

[ 30 : 12 ] They think everything's just fine and they don't want the light exposing what's going on in there. And that makes them willfully blind. But still, the light has come. The light has invaded the darkness.

When the darkness is invaded, everybody will be affected in some way. That light is going to shine on every person. It's going to expose them for who they really are. And the result of that is going to be division.

And sometimes they're going to be pretty. Because some are going to flee deeper into that darkness because they think they like things the way they are. But others will come to the light. And they will receive the eternal life that light brings.

But whichever way it goes, a personal decision has to be made about that light. That is how the light shines on all mankind. Now, as we well know, most will reject that light because they do, in fact, prefer the darkness.

And interestingly enough, many will try to hide their indifference by just not responding to it. They think they can just kind of dance around it. Many of you have heard things like that. They'll say stuff like, well, you know, I don't really quite accept that. You know, I'm not opposed.

[ 31 : 16 ] I'm not against it. No, it works for you. Great. Hey, I'm glad it works for you. But, you know, I mean, I got to kind of search things out a little bit. Well, whatever they may think, and however much they spin and dance with that, they have made a decision.

And it was not a good one. And while it is tragic that the majority of the world that Jesus created refused to know him, an even greater tragedy is revealed in verse 11. He came not only to a world that had been made by him, he came to his own people.

A people who had been adopted by God as his own chosen people, but his own would not receive him. This refers to the Jewish people, the nation of Israel, chosen ones of God through whom the light was to come.

This was the spiritual birthplace of the Messiah. Yet the nation would have no part of him. The word came to the place where the prophecies had been delivered and declared. The place where the people should have recognized him right away.

They should have recognized him best. But even here, where the reception should have been the greatest, his own would not accept him. He was not welcome at what should have been his earthly home.

[ 32 : 24 ] The ones who above all others should have been expecting him, they should have been waiting for him, they would not accept him. And the people of Israel rejected their God. And you know, we've got to remember something.

Many of these people were devoutly religious. Devoutly. But they were so wrapped up in their religious rules and in their traditions, they couldn't understand the truth.

Not even when he walked right into their midst. Everything they've been looking for. Now walked right into their camp, came right to them, but they would not receive him. They clung all the way to their precious law, but they never developed a relationship with their precious Savior.

But that doesn't mean nobody accepted. Most did not, but there were those who did. And those who did, they received the grace to become God's children. This is the grace God gives to those who will respond.

In this manner, John turns away from the tragedy of those who reject to focus on the grace that's there for those who accept. Those who accept become children of God. The ability to give this right to be children of God further speaks to the unique position of the word in that he was able to give something only God can do.

[ 33 : 38 ] Remember that. You ask Jesus to save you? You just ask him to do something only God can do. Privilege of being children of God is both special and exclusive. It's not some right that everybody has.

It's a special gift that's given to those who believe in the word. The point stressed here, salvation cannot be obtained through blood ties. It's not your heredity.

It's not based on a race or an upbringing or what neighborhood it was. It's not based on anybody's religious background either. You're not getting it because your granddaddy was a preacher in Wyoming or Arkansas somewhere. It doesn't pass through that way.

Now in the context of what John is addressing here, this is the Jewish part of the audience who thought they had salvation because of their Jewish heritage. Many of the Jewish faiths still believe that today. There are still many rabbis who teach that today.

And John declares that is not true. It's God's gift. But it's based on belief, not a heritage. Not only does it not come by your own desire, it doesn't come through any system that we can devise.

[ 34 : 38 ] It's not even covered. We don't seek the light of our own volition. Those in the darkness, they're running away from light. They're not running to it. It is an act of God that turns us toward that light.

Paul would later tell us in 1 Corinthians 2.14, the things of the spirit are foolishness to the natural man and he cannot receive them because they are spiritually discerned. We can't earn it.

We can't buy it. On our own, we're never going to figure it out. And we certainly would never accept it or seek it. But it is freely given by the grace of God.

But we've got to accept the gift. And the power to do that comes from God alone. But for those who do, those who do receive, for those who obtain that divine power, they now share in the divine new birth.

It is in this way that people are born into God's heavenly family. God's heavenly family. And this brings us to verse 14. The most clear and concise statement of scripture regarding the incarnation.

[ 35 : 37 ] The word, God himself, the Logos, took on humanity. He did not just take on the appearance. He took on flesh. It is here that Jesus and the word are linked as one and the same.

The very word of God took on flesh, became humanity in order to provide our salvation. While still fully God, Jesus became fully man.

And the word dwelt among us. This speaks to God's dwelling with Israel just as he dwelt with him in the tabernacle of the desert. The glory of God, once restricted to that tabernacle, is now visible in Christ.

The glory of the Father now dwelt inside of human flesh. The Shekinah glory from the Old Testament now dwelt among them in the person of Jesus Christ. Characteristics that can only be ascribed to God are now present in the incarnate word.

And that glory was full of grace and truth. The truth cannot be known apart from God. The word revealed the truth as well as bringing grace. Salvation comes only by believing in God's truth through which we then receive his saving grace.

[ 36 : 46 ] And that grace is provided by God's coming and working in the world despite the rejection and hostility of that world. Yet in spite of that rejection, which is going to become violent and which he knew full well was coming, God in his incarnation revealed himself to that rejecting word.

Now from here we move back to John the Baptist, the one who had the privilege of introducing Jesus to the world in verse 15. John bore witness of him and cried out saying, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me.

And of his fullness we have all received and grace for grace. Here again, the Baptist's inferiority to Christ is stated in the Baptist's own words. He clearly understood, he accepted his role as the herald, the one who was going to prepare the way.

And the Baptist knew that even though he was a little bit older and he was born before Jesus was, Jesus was greater. Even though the Baptist ministry came publicly first, people before Jesus showed up, he knew Jesus' ministry was going to surpass him in very short order.

He was there to point the way. And that's what we're here for too. And the Baptist also recognized Jesus' existence as the one who came before all things. He knew that in his mother's womb. [ 37 : 59 ] For Jesus existed before the Baptist was ever conceived. The fullness described speaks to the word as the source of all blessings. The infinity of his resources is spoken to here as well as how we have received all from him.

These blessings will continue to flow to those who have accepted him. There's no limit. There's no boundary to the grace extent. His grace continues to be passed out to us.

It's just like waves continue to roll at the seashore. And the prologue concludes with his final statement in verse 17. And of his fullness we have all received and grace for grace.

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

Now this is another statement that has tremendous impact. In the world of Judaism, there was no one more revered than Moses. I mean, he was virtual superhero status. Moses was the man.

[ 39 : 01 ] It was to Moses that the law had been given. But the point John's making here, it was only the law that was given. And it didn't even originate with him. It was given by God through Moses.

It was the law that displayed the righteous character of God. But while the law was righteous, it still fell short. There was and never could be salvation in the law because nobody could keep it.

And there's no grace built into it. There is no safety net under that law. You're up on the high wire, you make one mistake, you crash, you burn. The righteous holy law could have no room for grace and still uphold its righteous nature.

The law was given to convict sinners. The law is given to show them their need for salvation. Moses did not have the answer to this dilemma. While Moses was given the law, he could not fix the problem the law created for man.

It is the word who came to bring that salvation. In Christ came the grace and truth to fulfill the law's demands. And not only did he proclaim grace and truth, it was through his fullness that we have been allowed to receive it.

[ 40 : 09 ] It was to Christ that the law of Moses pointed. And by bringing grace and truth to fulfill the law, Christ's superiority over Moses is declared. As it's God's law, only God could provide the solution for it.

It was Jesus who came to fix the problem. God made himself visible to deal with the dilemma. John understood the complexity of this would be difficult for a Jewish audience to understand and to comprehend.

Jewish world have been told since they were yea high. No one could see God and live. Thus John's statement, no one has seen God at any time. So we need to understand when we talk about Jesus, we're not talking about God's full unveiled presence.

We're talking about God taking on human flesh which in effect veiled the presence. Through Moses, nobody could see God, period. But Jesus can reveal it.

It's a key point. It says in verse 18, declare in the New King James Version but some of your versions will say reveal. No created being can reveal God.

[ 41 : 14 ] Only God can reveal God. I can't do that. Your pastor can't do that. God dwells in life that is inaccessible to mortal man. He cannot be known except through Christ, his holy and living image.

Understand the significance of this. Of everyone in history who had borne witness to God, there was nothing like this ever before and until he returns. There's not going to be anything like it ever again. This is the one who was from the beginning with God where only God existed.

This is the one who descended from God and would ascend back to him. This is the one who comes from above and witnesses to all that he has seen and heard from the beginning of time.

God, who cannot be known unless he chooses to reveal himself, has made himself known because Jesus came to declare him. this introduction or prologue to the book of John is the most complete statement to Christ's pre-existence in Scripture.

He is unlike anything the world had witnessed before or since. He is the descended God of the universe who chose to step into humanity. His very being, his very essence, his very nature are one with God.

[ 42 : 27 ] God came to the earth in human flesh that he might reconcile the world to himself. And we have to recognize our redemption is not some divinely inspired human event that we pull off because all of a sudden we figure it out.

It's God himself at work in this fallen world to set right the damage that has been caused by sin. And the goal of this is to bring fallen humanity back into right relationship with its creator God.

To set right that which was damaged by the fall. Constant battle between light and darkness is addressed here as well. The battle lines are clearly drawn. You read through the gospel later and I hope you do.

I hope you've studied it before or if you haven't studied it now. But it's going to become even more obvious as you go through John. There is no compromise. There cannot be. While the darkness and light may coincide they do not associate.

And that will explain why a dark world would reject the true light that came from heaven. But even though the world hated him even though the world opposes the light even though the world is hostile to him God still loves the world and he entered into it that he might save it.

[ 43 : 34 ] And despite the fallen condition of the world despite the inborn corruption of humanity still God empowers those who trusted him to be transformed into his own children. That the word became flesh tells us God wants to communicate directly with us.

That the word became flesh tells us it's easily reached for those who seek him. This is not so much treasure hunt. No it's going to be buried in the ground somewhere and only a few are ever going to find it. The problem is only a few are truly seeking but those who truly seek they will indeed find it.

That the word became flesh also tells us this is not just some mere mortal man. The word is not just one among a number of potential saviors. No he is the savior because he is the Lord.

And the great irony for this is that when the cure for the sickness of the human condition came to the world it was rejected. The world preferred the sickness to the cure.

It still does. As we prepare to wrap this up you need to understand something about sin. Sin is not just some bad choices that are made. Sin is a state of being from which bad choices inevitably are going to come.

[ 44 : 49 ] Again, a state of being from which bad choices inevitably will come. John's gospel is presented with the full knowledge we do not live in this nice pretty fluffy little world that God just wants to make a little bit nicer and a little bit fluffier.

Jesus came to a world that is ugly and a world that can often be mean because of its sin problem. And the strange part the world knows it's not healthy.

We know that. Everybody knows that. Even your most liberal news sources will tell you that. Go to a bookstore. You'll find a whole ton of self-help books on the shelves there.

You've got a multi-million dollar industry which is telling us people understand things ain't what they're supposed to be. It's an admission that all is not well.

But sadly it also declares the futility and the emptiness of the world's proposed solutions. The world doesn't want the truth. It wants to manufacture its own fashionable and politically correct truths which is not truth at all.

[ 45 : 56 ] And it is because we have all come out of that world that we all have to be born again. We have to die to that old way and we have to be born into the new.

And that's only going to happen when you put your trust in the word. The word became flesh which means the word took the initiative. The word came to bring grace and truth for all who believe.

So as we leave today, leave with the understanding that in John's introduction he is presenting themes that will be expanded upon throughout his gospel. And the choice that mankind must make is already being presented.

In him was light and the light was the life of man. There is no light nor is there life apart from the word. To those who receive him they become the children of God.

The most in the world they ain't going. They refuse to receive him. It's continued right to this very day. Now whenever I come in as a guest in places I don't know where people are.

[ 46 : 59 ] I've only met a handful of you. Meaning that I hope everybody's where they need to be. But I don't know that. So the question you need to answer is are you in the light or are you in the darkness?

He knows you from the foundation of the world. But do you know him? Do you know for sure without question that you are one of his children? If you cannot answer that question without a hesitation

and give a firm yes to that you need to get with me after, get with your pastor after, get with somebody here but you need to get that question set.  
Don't walk out of here without it. Only mentors in Denver always have said obey the spirit promptly. The spirit's moving you. You need to get that issue settled in your heart and in your mind.  
There are many who think they're in the light but have never left the darkness at all. I deal with them every day. I remember half these guys in the prison, maybe more, they grew up in church. they know some of the lingo. Never got quite here though, did it? It's not just an issue in the prisons, it's an issue all through the world.  
[ 48 : 10 ] We just get some of the more dramatic pieces of it. So make sure you know who you are, make sure you know who you belong to.