

4/19/20 - John 1:1-18 - "Divine Credentials"

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- [0 : 0 0] Please join me in a word of prayer. Father, it is such a great opportunity to study your word.
- And Father, just to be awestruck in coming face to face with an inspired text, a text that has absolutes.
- There's no question in this text. What this text does is ask us a question. It changes us. It pushes us.
- It changes us. This word doesn't change. The meaning of this word doesn't change. And so, Father, help us to read this as if John is sitting in the back of the church, if he's streaming from over in his hometown.
- And let him, let his intention drive why we study what we're studying and why these words and these pages are bound together for us today.
- [1 : 0 0] Help us to see this today. And as we go along in our weeks of studying this, we pray this in Jesus' precious and holy name. Amen.
- Amen. Let's read John 1, 1 through 8. I don't have, we don't have any slides, but I assume that everybody has a Bible with them right now before we go into the point.
- Let's start in John 1, 1. It says, 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 that were made, 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. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- [2 : 0 7] He came as a witness to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, is coming into the world.
- He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.
- But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, 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 have seen His glory, glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- 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.
- [3 : 1 4] For from His fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side.
- He has made Him known. Point one today, is the Word is Jesus.

The Word is Jesus, and John 1. The Gospel of John tells a story, obviously. It's a gospel narrative. It's known as its genre.

And just like any good story, it has a captivating beginning, which kind of anchors its readers, the original audience of that time, and also us today, to set the body into full swing, into full motion.

And I have to ask you, who is Jesus? And why did Jesus come to earth? Don't just take my point, or my word for it.

[4 : 16] Let's take the Word of God and inspired factual notation. The Gospel of Mark begins a little bit different than the Gospel of John.

It begins with the baptism of Jesus. While Matthew and Luke go into quite great length about Jesus' history, and go back to even the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, John chose to go back even further. Before John. Before all these Gospels came to be. Before the Apostles.

Before the Prophets. We're going way back in the Old Testament. Before the Kings. Before the Judges. Before Moses. Before Joshua. Before Adam and Eve.

Before all creation. Verse 1 says, In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was God.

[5 : 15] And the Word was God. There is literally no verse which so accurately depicts the origin, the relationship, and the essence of Jesus Christ to God the Father than this single verse.

This single verse has kept many theologians busy for decades. And this verse is foundational to the Christian church.

Even back to the Reformation of the church back 500 years ago. It's built upon the Trinitarian belief as opposed to a Unitarian belief where God is one.

There's just a higher authority. We see that sometimes in AA. We see that sometimes from other religions where we acknowledge that there's a higher authority but we dismiss who Jesus was because Jesus was God.

Jesus was divine. God is one in essence in the Trinity. God is one in essence and three in person. If you ever want to get an A on your reports to a pastor of what the Trinity is, if you say God is one in essence and three in person you'll probably get a good score.

[6 : 29] All are equal in authority and power Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the Trinity explains that Jesus Christ was God.

He wasn't just a God as the Jehovah's Witness translation in the New World translation says on this verse. If you go to their Bible and look at that verse it doesn't say that the Word was God it says the Word was a God to fit their agenda.

But we know that Jesus Christ was God according to the inspired Word. And we use the ESV which is very close to the literal translation of the text.

And He was fully God. When He came into human history He was closed with something extra. So He was fully human being born under the law but also fully God to fulfill the law.

There's nothing taken away. Look at verse 1. We see His eternal existence His relationship and His essence of the Word. In the beginning He existed.

[7 : 37] Eternally we know from that. It echoes that of Genesis 1. We see the relationship that He was with God. There's a relationship that the Word is over here and God is over here.

So there's a unique relationship between the Word which is Jesus and God. But we also see that the Word was God. The essence of that Word.

Jesus Christ is what some call the Logos of God. Looking back Logos was a significant term to the Jews and the Greeks.

It might seem odd to us. Why doesn't this text just say Jesus? Why does it say Word? This is confusing. It would obviously solve a lot of problems in our modern day.

Well, the word Logos meaning word or a message in its definition is a title of Jesus understood as God's ultimate communication of truth about Himself.

[8 : 47] Logos, the Word is a title of Jesus understood as God's ultimate communication of truth about Himself. R.C. Sproul said the term Word in Greek Logos designates God the Son with respect to His deity.

Quote, Jesus and quote Christ refer to His incarnation and saving work. So, for the Jew to see this text, so for the Jewish people to see this text and they see the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God, they understand that something is being communicated here, something concrete because they understood something about God.

When God spoke and it was through the utterance of God's Word, all creation and salvation came to be. When God spoke, it happened.

Psalms 33, 6 says, the heavens were made by the Word of the Lord and all the stars by the breath of His mouth. Genesis 1, 3 says, then God said, let there be light and there was light.

So, the Jews understood what was going on here but also the Greeks understood on this side who are receiving the Gospel of John. In Greek philosophy, the Logos was the meaning of reason or of logic as an absolute force that, abstract force that brought order and harmony to the universe.

[10 : 22] So, this word, word, Logos, is significant for the very purpose of John trying to communicate something to his original audience.

While we can sometimes get taken aback by the usage of such a word, it had a purpose. So, both Jew and Greek can see something clearly, two vital things clearly, that He is eternally divine.

He existed before creation. He is distinguished from God, that He is with God, the word was with God, but He's also identified with God, that there is a unity between His divine essence.

Friends, do you believe this to be true? I mean, we're just a couple, we're still only a verse in. Do you believe this to be true? Looking at verse 2 and 3, it continues, He was in the beginning with God, all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

Jesus Christ is the Logos of God in existence, relationship, and essence. There is truly no greater revelation of the character and nature of the Father than through Jesus Christ.

[11 : 46] Christ. And even jumping down, this whole chapter, what we've read, 1 through 18, is sort of like a sandwich, which the beginning plays on the end and the middle, the other part plays on the other part, and there's a central point in it.

Jumping to the end on John 1, 18, it says, no one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side. He, God, has made Him known.

John is literally saying, behold, our God. God, the Lamb of God. Remember Colossians 1, 15, where it said, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Friends, do you believe this to be true? This has tremendous implications in our lives as believers. Either we're believing and people are being martyred and sacrificed and persecuted for their faith based on a lie or truth.

This is it. It comes down to, is this true? For the Christian, I hope that you see there is no guesswork of knowing who God is any longer since Jesus Christ became man on earth.

[13 : 01] going into the second point today. We see as the text continues, Jesus illuminates grace and truth.

Jesus illuminates grace and truth. And not only do we see the essence of His divine being, but we see the expression of His divine being as well.

In verse 4, it continues, it says, 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.

Not only has Jesus eternally existed as the Word, but He is also identified as an expression of life and light.

Man, so the Jew, they understand clearly what Isaiah 9-2 says. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. A light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.

[14 : 15] And so, the Jew and the Greek understand what Jesus was saying in John 8-12, where He says, I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John continues to identify Jesus as the author of life. Not only life, physical, but we're going to see it's a little bit different as well.

John is essentially saying the one who brought life, physical, is bringing a new life to the church, spiritual, to those who believe in Him.

in Jesus. There is life and light in contrast to that which is in the world, which is death and darkness. And all life and light found in this world has its origins back to Jesus.

This world is full of death and darkness. This world is corrupt. It's always been. There's nothing new under the sun. And death simply means separation.

[15 : 26] So in a physical sense, it is when our souls, death when we experience it, is when our souls are separated from our bodies. But in a spiritual sense, it is when our souls are separated from God.

Death. So we understand John is stating that Jesus Christ brought life to the spiritually dead and light to the spiritually darkened.

Jesus Christ brought life to the spiritually dead and light to the spiritually darkened. Read with me in verse 16 and 17, kind of jumping down to the end.

For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

From His fullness we received grace. This is a new covenant which is here in Jesus Christ, grace and truth. Remember, John is a contrasting author, and John makes a contrast between the law given to Moses and grace and truth given through Jesus Christ.

[16 : 42] And now this isn't to negate the law of Moses of grace and truth. There was obviously a lot of grace and a lot of truth in the law of Moses because we have the same God from the beginning to the end.

It's not a New Testament God or an Old Testament God. There was grace and truth through the sacrificial system, through the old covenant saints who experienced grace and forgiveness. John Calvin writes of the new covenant believer that quote, what is ascribed to us is simply or absolutely denied to old covenant saints.

But it's not simply or absolutely denied to old covenant saints, but that a comparison is made between the less than the greater, as we say, because they had nothing more than little specks of a true light, the full brightness of which shines daily around us.

We see that the Old Testament was simply just a couple sparks of what was to come. The Old Testament would sort of see forward if there's something coming and they would have faith in that, essentially faith in the coming Messiah.

The truth John is explaining here that if those opposed to Jesus truly did believe in the law of Moses, they would have easily believed in Jesus Christ.

[18 : 05] This is what their whole foundation rested upon, a coming Messiah. I like how Boyce states some great contrasts on this verse.

And I'm just going to read. It was a pretty long quote, but it's like about eight lines here. He says, quote, Under the law, God demands righteousness from people.

Under grace, he gives it to his people. Under the law, righteousness is based on Moses and good works. Under grace, it is based on Christ and Christ's character.

Under the law, blessings accompany obedience. Under grace, God bestows his blessings as a free gift.

The law is powerless to secure righteousness and life for a sinful race. And grace came in its fullness with Christ's death and resurrection to make sinners righteous before God.

[19 : 11] If anybody was with us on Easter, this is called justification. We are declared righteous now. Friends, it is good news that Jesus Christ is the author of life.

It is good news, but he is also the word of life which sustains and preserves his creation. creation. Not only is Jesus the divine essence of God, the creator of all that we see around, but he is also the sustainer who preserves his creation.

As Colossians 1.17 says, he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Jesus Christ is holding all creation together together as well.

Even in the darkest moments of life that we might experience in the world where we're looking around like, where is God? Has he left us? Regardless of what it might seem in the darkest moments of life, he is actively working all things out.

He never will leave his church either or abandon his church. What could occur in this life that is outside of his control, of oversight?

[20 : 37] There's absolutely nothing. He holds all things together, all creation together, and church, he is holding you together. He is holding the church together.

He is the head of the church, his body. You think your advancements in life have solely anything to do with your efforts and what you bring to the table?

As if anything that you have to offer was something that you acquired on your own. Everything that we have is a gift from God. Worship and give attention to the one who holds all things together and is preserving us and sustaining us.

Let's not lose focus of that. Let your pride die at the foot of the cross and worship this life giver and this light bearer. As we go into the third point, Jesus is the masterpiece.

See what I did there? Jesus is the masterpiece. Liz is laughing. She doesn't even see the live stream right now but she knows what I'm saying. John 6 continues, there was a man sent from God whose name was John.

[21 : 58] He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light. For anybody who is accustomed to knowing anything about artwork and things like that, this made me think of an easel.

that an easel in and of itself doesn't really have too much of a value. Usually it's just a couple pieces of wood screwed together and just something that's supposed to be sturdy enough to hold something.

What brings meaning to that easel is that which sits upon it. So thinking of an easel that's just sitting, I think we might have an easel that's just sitting without anything on it.

It really has no meaning. But what makes an easel significant is the masterpiece that is placed upon that easel. If you could imagine, we're going to talk about this next week a little bit more in depth so I don't want to exhaust the illustration, but John was essentially that.

People mistaken him, the easel, for the masterpiece. Are you the one who has come? He says, no. He is not the one.

[23 : 17] But he is upholding this masterpiece. Behold the Lamb of God, he says. John the Baptist, locust and honey guy, we all know the stories and the funny images of John the Baptist, right?

He bore the same witness about the masterpiece. Just an easel is not to be confused with part of the artwork. John propped Jesus up for the world to see, just as an easel, proclaiming that message.

Behold the Lamb of God. Verse 8 says, He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. And looking down in verse 14 and 15, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen His glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. This is the masterpiece John bore witness about.

And He cried out, This is the one whom I said, He who comes after me, ranks before me, before He was before me, because He was before me.

[24 : 25] Verse 14 simply says, Jesus, the divine, became a man. Notice the key word in this verse, become.

Come. Nowhere in this text says there's any reduction in His divinity. Nowhere. But He puts something on additional to His divinity.

This is important for the church. Because Jesus who wasn't fully divine is not a Jesus who can atone for your sin upon the cross. There was no reduction in His divinity, but in addition to His being.

God literally put on flesh and dwelt among men. We behold Christ's glory because He is the only Son from the Father.

The expression of God's grace and absolute truth. What the Old Testament looked forward to, and what the New Testament we see fulfilled. We see the mission of Christ.

[25 : 25] That John is beholding just as an easel to a masterpiece. We see the mission of Christ. Christ did not come to withhold, but He came to give His mission. It was one to be shared.

It was one to serve. See, verse 9 says, the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. His mission was to not only give life to the spiritually dead, but He was to bear light to the spiritually darkened.

Jesus is identified as the true light, which gives light to everyone. The light which John bore witness to, that He upheld, that He supported, saying, this is the Messiah.

So not only is He the masterpiece, He's also the lighthouse that's erected in the darkness. darkness. That even though the darkness might be so consuming, there might not be a star out, there might be clouds everywhere, but man, when that lighthouse shines, you can see it.

It pierces the darkness, no matter how dark the darkness is. And actually, the opposite is true. The greater the darkness is, the truer you can see the light.

[26 : 41] This is true in our world today, isn't it? Jesus Christ is the gospel, church. He is the gospel, the good news. Jesus is the gospel.

Baxter's quoted this in one of his commentaries. He says, fundamentally, our Lord's message was Himself. He did not come merely to preach a gospel.

He Himself is the gospel. He did not merely come to give bread. He said, I am the bread. He did not merely come to shed light.

He said, I am the light. He did not merely come to show the door. He said, I am the door. He did not merely come to point the way. He said, what? I am the way.

I am the truth. I am the life. The gospel is Jesus. Sometimes we can miss the masterpiece, I think, and worship the easel, if you know what I mean.

[27 : 46] The very things that are supposed to be lifting up and proclaiming Jesus Christ, whatever that might be in life, I have a feeling that we all have a tendency in our human condition, our human nature, to worship the easel rather than the masterpiece.

This goes for church leaders. That might go for your favorite theologian. Maybe I quoted your favorite theologian in this book, and all of a sudden you are attuned to the message. Oh, well, if he quotes Baxter or Sproul, yeah, I am going to listen to him.

Yeah. Idolatry. You are missing the masterpiece at times. Are you worshipping the easel church rather than the masterpiece?

And this can also stretch outside of church. This could be possibly your financial status, maybe your social status, maybe a certain fame, maybe you wish you had a couple more followers on Instagram, maybe you wish you had some sort of recognition, maybe you want to be an author all for the sake of just having your name in millions of stores around the world.

Idolatry. Let's not miss the masterpiece. So as we come to a conclusion today, I want to look at what this whole, whether you, you may have noticed how I've been skipping, going from the beginning to the end, beginning to the end, a little bit through this.

[29 : 19] It's for a point, because this text actually zeros in on verse 10 through 13. The whole message is almost as if the thesis that John states in the end of his book of saying the object and the implications, he's stating all this object and he's stating the implications right now, and it is central to verse 1 through 18.

Just as there's a, every good story has the evidence laid out that we spoke about, it culminates to this one question. And it's just as John is trying to convey this one question to his audience and the readers.

Do you accept or reject who Jesus is? And honestly, this is going to flow through the rest of the series. Through seven signs and miracles through this series, we're going to see, do you accept or reject Jesus?

We have a people group. We have two people groups in verse, between verse 10 and 13. Let's look at the first people group. Those who love the darkness. It says, He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. Those who dwelled with Jesus and even within his creation, who could see the stars in the sky, who could see the clouds, who could see the trees, who could see all life, didn't receive him, didn't acknowledge him as being the creator of it.

[31 : 05] Even though he walked within, Jesus walked within the same synagogue walls that were built for him, still people were reluctant to receive him.

In verse 11, he did not receive him. Just as John 3, 19 says, This is the condemnation that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

We know this because when we come in contact with people who don't believe, they say we're bigoted, they say that that we have a message of hate, that absolute truth is hate speech, and this and that.

No, all we're saying is that you're making a choice that you love the darkness rather than the light. It's our evil deeds. It's not our word, it's not our opinion, this is the word of God.

So we see the first people group in verse 10 through 11, those who love the darkness. Then verse 12 and 13 as we close in the readings today, we see a second people group, those who love the light.

[32 : 20] Verse 12, it continues, But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So those who received him, believed in his name, just as a thesis towards the end of the book, the whole meaning of John writing this, were adopted into a family.

We're imparted with the same sonship of Christ, as Christ was, Christ had with the Father, God the Father. We have sonship in Christ. We are children of God.

What do you do with this message? Where are you today with this message? Do you love the darkness, or do you love the light? What do you do with Jesus?

I can't even fathom, sometimes, the phrase, children of God, as verse 12 says.

[33 : 36] I can't even fathom it. Because we have such a beautiful picture, and we're going to get into it a little bit more in depth, of the implications of this.

By being a child of God, the Bible also states this as adoption. That you're brought into a relationship with an unknown family, and you're not just given a piece of paper that says you're adopted.

You don't just get a church membership, a little packet. You don't just get a baptism certificate when you get baptized, and all of a sudden, that qualifies you as being adopted.

No. It's a relationship that you're brought into of adoption. But also, when we hear child of God, man, that brings to light the new birth that we have.

This is Nicodemus inquired of Jesus late at night. How are we to be born again? But in so doing, when we're born again, when Jesus brings life to the spiritually dead, He gives you a new nature.

[34 : 41] He gives you a new identity, new passions, all brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. The third person of the Trinity who is equal in power and authority with Jesus and the Father.

So as we come to a close, I want to ask a couple questions to help provoke some thought. Christians, you, I don't know if you know this or not, but you have been given a new status.

You've been given a new status physically. What you do with your body, how you worship God with your body, you've been given a new status physically. You've been given a new status emotionally. You've been given a new status spiritually.

The new life and the light of Christ, light in Christ, affects the whole entire human being. Why do we despise this truth and chase after the things of this world?

Why? If we truly know who Christ is and the implications that it has on who we are, why do we still chase the things of this world? Like for instance, I want to encourage us today in a day of a season of pandemic.

[36 : 03] If pandemic hits, whenever it hits again, we know it's going to hit. There's nothing new under the sun. This has happened in the past. When pandemic hits, do we shrink back in fear?

Almost to the point of having just emotional paralysis, just, oh, I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything. Or do we fear the Lord? When we're on the brink of war, do we bunker down in defense and, oh, we got to, we got to, we got to, I'll bunker in and I'm going to protect this or what are we doing?

Do we have an eternal view in mind? Do we care about the salvation of souls even at that time? When someone challenges us in our faith of who Jesus is, do we respond in anger?

If we respond at all. When the world is calling out for answers, do we cower down to the potential of hurting people's feelings with this absolute truth?

We're not having words to say. We are His church. We are members, body parts. We are, we are not defined by a building or a church name or a title or denomination.

[37 : 21] The church is defined by people. And the church is not characterized by retreats either, but rather advancements.

In pandemic, in times of war, in opposition to our faith, and always having an answer for Jesus Christ who holds all things together, no one can take this testimony from us, not even death itself.

Jesus Christ must define every aspect of our life to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. I was just talking to a church member two days ago about the black plague that occurred.

And you'd have pastors that are out on the streets that would dig a hole and preach from the hole saying that at least I'll help somebody bury me if I die from this black plague.

I am fulfilling my duty and honor to Jesus Christ by preaching the gospel. I am different than the world and I have fear for God, not fear of man.

[38 : 24] You are a new creation. We don't fear the future because we are going to the Father's house. We can stop worrying about whether our needs on this earth will be met if we have enough toilet paper from Walmart.

Forget it. We can stop worrying about if our needs are met on this earth. We will be met because everything will be met because our Father gives good gifts to His children. We don't need to be anxious about money, the stock markets, the economy.

Yeah, things are going to change but God's still on the throne. We don't need to be anxious about this money. We don't need to be anxious about stock markets because we know our inheritance is not in earthly banks but in a heavenly realm.

Just as Colossians 1 says, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated. Or Colossians 3, I'm sorry. Our hope, our expectation is not in this world, church.

You are not of this world and Jesus was not of this world and the world crucified Him. Someday, as children of the King, we will shine like the sun in our Father's kingdom just as Matthew 13, 43 states.

[39 : 36] The one who has numbered every grain of sand, has numbered every hair on her head. You are His. How do you respond to that in a time like today?

And then thinking of the non-Christian. If you don't know Christ and you're tuning in on the stream just kind of scrolling around checking out some churches, if you're not in Christ, maybe your church maybe hasn't even preached Jesus in this type of way as being fully divine.

I can't imagine what's probably going through your minds at this time. You might be reading the Gospel of John for the first time because if you don't know who Jesus is and His unique relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, I really challenge you to return to the live stream next week, to tune into our Q&A; after this service today, to kind of talk about this and grapple with it because theologians have been grappling with it for decades.

I challenge you to dig into this series that John is writing to you. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh who came according to Scripture that all the Old Testament looked forward to and prophesied to, which was revealed in actual human history.

John is a real person who ate real locusts, drank real honey. This is real history, real accounts. Don't you want to receive life everlasting to be with Jesus?

[41 : 13] Light that shines in the darkness? Jesus is the life giver. He's the light bearer. Trust in this message today because you're not promised to have tomorrow.

You're not promised to have this afternoon. Don't wait until it's too late to make that decision for Jesus Christ. What are you waiting for anyhow? And don't do it alone.

Let us walk with you in this journey that you embark on. And let this message bring about this last question for you. Will you reject Jesus or will you receive Him?

What will you do with Jesus? Let's pray. Let's pray.