JESUS IS THE WORD

John 1:1-18
Key Verse 1:14

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

We have been studying the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel was a man of great faith and decision-making power. Through his spiritual struggle to be right with God in all things, he was purified in his inner man, until he could see the vision of the coming of the Son of Man. It was God's precious promise for his suffering people. No matter how hard Daniel tried, however, he couldn't fully understand what God had in mind. For example, in his last vision the angel told Daniel, "When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." Daniel said, "I heard, but I didn't understand." God's plan for world salvation was so mysterious. If God loved his chosen people so much, then why did he wish for them to be broken? Why do God's people have to suffer so much, before God's salvation comes?

Not only so, but many philosophers and thinkers in the world have struggled to find the meaning of life and the purpose for our existence, and failed. They believed that there is universal truth and universal good. But they were frustrated by their own limitations and inability. Even if they discovered some truth about themselves or the world, they couldn't know that it was the truth because of their inability to put it into practice, faithfully. Finally, philosophers have come to the sad conclusion that they can't know if there is any truth, and even if there is, they are powerless to live by it. James Joyce expressed this frustration so well in the last line of his short story, Araby: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger." It is unfortunate reality that even as we have gained mastery and control over the physical world, we have found ourselves farther and farther from the truth by which we must live.
Into this world of darkness, a light has shone. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ God has taken what was so hard for his people to understand, and made it plain. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God has shown the way, the truth and the life to all men. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of great joy that is for all people of the world. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed salvation and righteousness for everyone who believes. Isaiah 9:3 expresses this well: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

According to tradition, the apostle John wrote this gospel of John after the other three gospels had appeared. It is clear that in his gospel, as well as in the letters attributed to him, the author is mindful of the historical, spiritual and philosophical context of the life of Jesus Christ. With deep, personal conviction, the author communicates the amazing story that it was in his generation and among his people that God chose to fulfill what he had promised to his servants like Daniel by sending Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world. Not only so, God would answer all the burning questions of mankind through the life of one man, Jesus Christ. The gospel of John is written to reveal the true impact of the life of Jesus Christ on the world. The author confessed in the last verse, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” Nevertheless, the gospel of John is the masterpiece of the New Testament, through which we can find the power and impact of Jesus’ life and how it can touch any and every individual, if only they confess that Jesus is the Christ. At the same time, the gospel of John encompasses the whole world, revealing the extent of Jesus’ glory as the Son of God. Finally, the gospel of John is intensely personal, revealing how one man came to touch, to see and to know the living Word of God. May God bless us through the study of John’s gospel to make the same incredible journey from darkness to light, from death to life and from shame to glory! May God also use us as witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ like John for the sake of leading many to know Jesus as the Christ and so have life in his name!

Today, we will study the prologue of John’s gospel, in which John
declares the true nature of the man Jesus Christ, and the themes of his gospel account of Jesus’ life. May God bless us to open our spiritual eyes through today’s passage, and newly meet Jesus, the Word of God, as we worship him!

I. Jesus is the Word

First, Jesus is the Creator God (1-3). Look at verses 1-3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." According to Genesis 1:1, God was in the beginning, and nothing else. But Genesis chapter 1 also reveals that God is more than one person, by introducing us to the Spirit of God in verse 2, and to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in verse 26. They are all eternal aspects of God’s divine nature. They are all living, responsible personalities who contributed to the work of Creation and contribute now to the work of world salvation. God is One. God is also Many. Jesus spoke of this spiritual reality in his prayer on the night of his arrest. John 17:11 says, “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.” The oneness of the Creator God is the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Verses 1 through 3 introduce us to the Son as he was in the beginning. He was the Word of God. The Word of God is eternal. The Word of God is equal with God. The Word of God was with God and he was God. He was with God in the beginning.

The Word of God is the appropriate title for Jesus’ divine nature as God. It is because the author expresses in this way Jesus’ role in Creation and Jesus’ role in world salvation. When God wanted to create a world suitable for life and for the happiness of his creatures, God brought it into being through his word. And when God wanted to make creatures that would be in his image to rule over the world he had made, he declared to his Son, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...” (Ge. 1:26a). This was to be a world that would reveal his Son, and his love for his Son. He is the Word of God, because he is the power of God to give life, and he is the expression of God’s love for
what he has made. The author uses the Greek term “Logos” fully aware that the Greek philosophers had used this word to capture their idea of an underlying order and purpose to the world they saw. Jesus is indeed the reason for all Creation. He is the power by which it came into being, and he is the purpose for which it exists.

In this way, John’s gospel declares that Jesus is the answer to mankind’s deepest questions and the solution to his greatest problems. No one can answer the questions: “Why is the world the way it is? Why do rivers flow? Birds sing? Cats meow?” The world and the life we find in it is an awesome mystery which science can describe, but ultimately cannot explain. But those who know that God created the world by the Word and for the Word can know the true meaning of this world and even of their very existence. They can answer life's deepest questions, saying, “I was made by God to serve as ruler and steward of his world. When I live according to God's will and purpose for my life, as found in Jesus Christ, then I can truly give glory to God with my life, and I can enjoy my life in God to the fullest extent. Because my God lives, I too will live with him, forever!” True philosophy reveals the meaning of our lives, and enables us to live according to the truth. Jesus is the Word of God through whom we can find all knowledge and truth that our hearts and our minds desire.

Second, Jesus is the Light of men (4-5). Look at verses 4 and 5. “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” In these verses, Jesus is revealed as the Sovereign Owner of all life. Our lives are not our own. We might be able to seize the day, but we cannot seize or hold on to our lives. They are given to us by God and they return to God at the appointed time. No one chooses when he might lay down his life. No one, after laying it down, can take it up again. But Jesus, through his resurrection from the dead, proved that he is the owner of life, and he is the giver of life. Therefore, our lives belong to him, though we have been made stewards of them for a time. When we take good care of the life we have been entrusted with, in heaven we can share with Jesus the fruits of our life lived here on earth. May God bless you to know that you are stewards of God’s life in you.
Jesus is also the Light of men. Look again at verse 4b. “...and that life was the light of men.” Jesus’ resurrection and new life in the kingdom of God is the light of men. After a hard life of struggling and laboring in the world, what can be our true hope? When we look objectively at the world around us, there is only darkness. The earth is a wonderful home created for us by God. But the atmosphere is only a thin skin that protects us from complete and utter darkness. In the same way, our lives are sheltered in our bodies for a time. But darkness and death seem to be inevitable for all men. History is filled with the stories of countless men whose lives burned brightly for a time, only to flicker and then be hushed by the darkness and stillness of death. Jesus’ life, however, was not silenced by his gruesome death on the cross. After the suffering of his body, he was raised from the dead on the third day, and appeared to his disciples. They saw him ascend into heaven, and they heard the angels’ promise that he would come again to bring them to be with him. Jesus’ life is the life that won the victory over the power of sin and death. Jesus’ life is the light of men, showing the way for all men to have eternal life in him.

Look again at verse 5. “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” In this verse, the author presents us with a contrast between the light that Jesus brings and the darkness. What is the darkness? As we have already studied, all men were living in darkness until Jesus came, because they could not go beyond their limitations to discover God’s truth and purpose for them or for the world. Why are men so limited in what they can see and understand? It is because of the rebellion of sin. The rebellion of sin makes us turn away from God’s truth and God’s light when it exposes our sin, unbelief and unthankfulness. As we learned from the prophet Daniel, to turn our attention to the truth takes great effort and concentration. So Daniel fell asleep so many times talking to God’s angels. And even he could not pay attention or understand to the end. The darkness of this world is very deep. The light of Jesus has shined into the darkness. But the darkness does not easily give up its captives. The light of Jesus shines into our lives, onto our campuses and nations, but men so easily turn away rather than accept the message of life Jesus brings. So many lights in history promised to show the way for all men to escape the darkness. Some foolish people even imagined that the
latest rock band might be the light for their generation. But only Jesus’
light still shines, and will shine until the very end. His message of
repentance and obedience to his commands may not be easy to accept. But we should not reject the truth because it is hard. May God
help us to turn our attention to Jesus, the light of men, and bring us
and our campus out of the darkness and into his wonderful light.

II. The Word became Flesh

First, The hope of all men (6-13). The darkness is resistant to the light.
But God does not abandon men to the darkness, in spite of our
rebellious minds and hearts. God sent a witness to prepare the way, so
that all men might believe and come into the light. His name was John
– John the Baptist. John was a prophet who came in the spirit of Elijah
to turn his people’s heart back to God. He spoke so powerfully that
some thought he might be the Christ. But he himself was not the light,
he came only as a witness to the light. Look at verse 9. “The true light
that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” Jesus was a
Jew and a descendant of David. But he did not come as the Savior of
the Jews only. Jesus came to bring light to all men, if only they
believed. There is the story of John Newton. He was a ship owner and
slave trader who brought countless numbers of slaves to America from
Africa. So many people died because of his careless pursuit of money.
Then one day he read the Bible, and the word of God pierced his heart.
He could no longer trade in peoples’ lives for money. But he did not
feel that God’s truth was the end. He found in Jesus a wonderful light
that showed him a new way to live as his servant. He lived from then
on as a minister and pastor for God’s flock in England. He shepherded
many mental patients, such as the hymn writer William Cowper, and
helped them give their best talents to God. Of course, he also wrote
the beautiful testimony of God’s life in him, called Amazing Grace.
There is no one whose life is so black and dark from sin, that Jesus’
light cannot transform and make into a tearful testimony of God’s grace.

But the fact remains that the world is still in darkness. Even God’s own
chosen people, the Jews, have rejected the light of Jesus. It seems
that their persistent unbelief defies the promise of God. But it is not
so. God’s promise and faithfulness stand, in the face of the darkness and unbelief of the world. Look at verses 12 and 13. “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” Before Jesus came, the barrier between God and man due to man’s sin was insurmountable. The world was destined for darkness. But no longer. Even though sinful men rejected Jesus and caused him to be killed by hanging him from a tree, Jesus continues to hold out the way of life and peace to all men. And any person who takes hold of this promise by faith can be changed from a child of darkness into a child of God. It is not possible by human effort or self-righteous observance of the law. But it is possible when we repent of the rebellion of sin, and receive Jesus as Christ and Lord. We don’t need to be discouraged by the rebellion and unbelief of others. We must take hold of this precious promise, and hold out this promise of life and light to others, as shepherds of God’s flock in our generation.

Second, Grace and Truth (14-18). Look at verse 14. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” In this part, John gives his personal testimony of Jesus’ life and ministry. It is the testimony of one who has seen the glory of the Word in the body of a man, Jesus of Nazareth. It was an unforgettable experience that the author wants to share with the whole world. There is a funny story of a tribe of headhunters in New Zealand who had never seen white men before. Then one day they came. For a brief moment, they thought that these men were gods. But after several of them took some of the women as wives, the women of the tribe realized they weren’t gods at all. In the Bible, king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon once demanded that his wise men tell him the dream he had and interpret it for him. The wise men were appalled and forgot to whom they were speaking. They said, “What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.” (Da. 2:11). Human beings are human beings. They are not gods. There is a huge gap between God and men that no one can bridge. So, we are very lonely and fatalistic, being cut off from the one who made us in love. Maybe the author John was especially so,
because of his hot temper, mundane life as a fisherman and idealistic dreams. But God did not leave such a man alone. God came down to this world and dwelt among men. God came in the form of a man, so that others like John and the rest of the disciples could touch him, hear him and follow him. It was an experience that lifted the veil of darkness from John’s heart, and enabled him to see the glory of God. We must have this experience of meeting God personally through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The man Jesus was full of truth and grace. This is John’s expression to describe the meaning of Jesus’ coming into the world. Men cannot live without truth. Those who live according to a lie walk in darkness, and cannot overcome themselves or their situations. However, we cannot face the truth of who we are or what we’ve done, due to the power of sin at work in us. We need grace to bear what we could not bear to see. The law of Moses, for example, was God’s best gift to men, because it showed men the truth so that they might live by it and live under God’s blessings. But man’s sinful nature took advantage of the law to bring men under condemnation from the law, and therefore all the more slaves of the power of sin and death. There was no way out for mankind from this cycle of sin and death. But Jesus came bringing grace and truth. He touched the Samaritan woman, who had been married five times, and helped her to be transformed from a sinful woman into a beautiful messenger of God’s salvation. He touched the young man, John, and made him a disciple and then an apostle. Later, he became known as the apostle of love because of his persistent message, “Love one another.” We need the grace and truth of Jesus. When we come to Jesus by faith, his grace and truth becomes the source of eternal blessing in our life. When we live by faith in Jesus, we can experience that God himself is present in our lives, and leading us back to his heavenly kingdom.

This world continues to be in darkness, because of rebellion, sin and unbelief. But the Word of God, Jesus, came, to bring light to all men. May God use us as witnesses of that light through our changed lives, and clear message of truth and grace, so that through us, all men might believe!