

Topic	The Word of Life
Reference	John 1:1-18
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF JOHN:

It was written around the time of Emperor Domitian from Ephesus roundabouts. It was written to gentiles and Jews. The gentiles are attracted to Judaism, as well as, the Jews dispersed all over Asia.

PURPOSE:

John 20:30-31 (ESV) Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That is the purpose. So when you read the Book of John that purpose should undergird every passage that is what John is writing towards.

Who is John?

The disciple whom Jesus loved. He is actually John, the son of Zebedee, it was attributed to him by the second century AD and today we are going to look at a portion of scripture traditionally called the prologue. The prologue is the first 14 verses enclosed with the phrase 'God' on either side. This is like we called 'Inclusio'.

A prologue is something like, if you go to movies you see a trailer and the trailer will introduce to you the characters in a very fleeting manner and then the book will go backwards and show you the rest.

- The preexistence son of God, and we read about him in John 17.
- We talk about light coming into the world today, which is picked up in John 3, John 12.
- The only and only son, that is picked up in John 3:16
- In Him was life and that's picked up in John 5:26.

So these are all the themes which are introduced within the prologue and then this introduction then will expand on it and the rest of the book. So this is the scheme.

What is the Word?

Why should we bother with the Word?

How do we respond to the Word?

A. What is this Word? (v1-3)

- 1) The rationale for the use of the “Word”
- 2) The characteristics of the Word
- 3) Our accountability to the Word

B. Why should we bother with the Word (v4-13)

- 1) The Word brings life
- 2) John the Baptist is the witness to the Word
- 3) The Word confronts and divides us

C. How do we respond to the Word v 14-18)

- 1) The Word took upon human nature in the person of Jesus
- 2) We experience the glory of God in the Jesus

A. WHAT IS THE WORD?

John 1:1-2 (ESV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God

Here the ‘Word’ being repeated three times. The Word means, the inner thoughts of someone or the reason. Another possible meaning is the ‘outward expression of that inner thought’. The logos is different in different cultures. So we’ve got two sets for audiences in the Book of John, Greeks and Jews. For the Greeks, the logos or the word is a superior power of the universe that organizes and regulates everything. If you look around we see diversity among peoples, their behaviour, the animals have diversity also. The Greeks sort of think, there must be some unifying factor to all this. The Greeks look at the diversity of life, there must be some unity out of this diversity, otherwise we would be living in a multiverse not a universe. There must be a unifying principle, and that principle is called the logos. So you talk to average Greek guy, you talk about logos, he understands what logos is. Come to you guys, you don’t understand what logos is, so you understand what the force is. The force is like the logos, the underlying power, the rationale behind the whole universe. So where is the word, which is the unifying principle to the Greeks, to the Hebrews it is different. The word and logos is the one that is active in creation when God said, let there be light and there was light.

The actual word is the power of God, it is the power of God to create, it is the power of God for revelation. The word of God came to Jeremiah, the word of God came to Haggai or Malachi. So the word of God comes in revelation. The word of God comes in salvation where Psalm 118, he set out his word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction. So the word of God not only reveals, it also heals and delivers.

The phrase ‘in the beginning was Word’, brings us back to Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:1 (ESV) In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

So John is trying to bring you back to the days of Genesis and that in the beginning God created heaven and earth. That’s means in the beginning was the word, they kind of related. That means the word was eternal, it is from the beginning. Now in the Greek and Hebrew minds, it is very simple. For them everything is divided into two categories; one category is created and the one is not created. The one that is created is everything in the world, everything that exists because they are created. Not created, things or beings that have not created because they have always existed and this category must be God or the eternal rational principle or something there. So therefore John is saying, Jesus is eternal.

John 8: 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Before Abraham was, the word is ‘Ginomai’, which is born or created. Jesus creates a difference here. The ‘I am’ is taken from Exodus chapter 3

13-14 (ESV) The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

‘I am’ is the name of God. So he is the ultimate being, because he is eternal and because of that they pickup stone. With saying ‘I am’ Jesus was claiming to be God.

‘The Word was with God’. That means they are two distinct persons, they are not one and the word was God, that’s even worse.

3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

That’s very-very clear, this is one being and three persons. Upon these few verses, most of the heresies of the first 300 years of Christianity came up because of these verses. They have been arguing about it and they had two big council, the council of Nicea and the Calsidon, 100 years later on just to discuss this particular issue, as the identity of who God is. Here we have lots of heresies, they go in either direction. Either because you are two fixated on one God and it can be nothing else or you are fixated on the fact that, there are three God, trithiasm as it were. Heretics like Arius, who was a priest in the third century and he said that there was one God and Jesus is created and not truly God, Jesus is the first and greatest of God’s creation. He was the label the

heretic in the council of Nicea where they actually proclaimed that Jesus is God, the second person in the trinity.

Then we have got ideas like *adoptionism* where the word was not the Son of God but someone who is adopted. So word is a human person and God says, this is my son means God adopts him and then he goes to the cross. When he goes to the cross, the spirit of God leaves him and he says, my God, my God why have you forsaken me. So that's how it fits in. Again that diminishes the nature of Jesus Christ.

Then we have got Sabellius, a third century priest in Rome. He said, this is God in three modes. He said, if you look at the rays of the sun, the rays are like the sun. So God can appear in two modes, either the one up there or the rays, they are both the same thing. What he is saying is that God is God the father and then after a while he changes clothes and become God the son and then he becomes invisible and becomes God the Holy Spirit.

There are people who believe in it, for example TD Jakes of United States, Oneness Pentecostal, they believe that God is father, son and the Holy Spirit, but the trick is when he is being baptized as God up there, the Holy Spirit comes down as dove and then there is Jesus Christ. It is kind of difficult, if you believe in that, that's actually idolatry because that's not God and when you say, for God so loved the world, he gave his son. He actually didn't give his son, because that was himself disguised. So it makes it a bit funny.

Jehovah's Witness take issue with this and they translate the word,

John 1:1-2 (NWT) In the beginning was the Word, + and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.

That means the word was a god, not The God. The Bible says in Titus,

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

It is unmistakeable, there is that God and God is Jesus Christ. What about Thomas?

John 20:28 (ESV) 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

It means he actually worshipped and Jesus accepted the worship because He is God.

18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known

The word 'only' is basically monogenous, which means the one and only, the unique. The father's side is 'colpos' in Greek, it is translated as father's breast or side. It is a place of great intimacy.

John 13:23 (ESV) One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,

So therefore Jesus Christ is God. So the fact that Jesus is God the creator, we are his creation gives us identity, we are created as God's creation, we have a purpose and we have accountability. Colossian says,

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together

We live, we breathe, even if you are 90 years old and sitting in a home alone you have a purpose, you live for him and sometimes because we live in a world where we reject God and your friends have all gone away, all that are left with is nothing. God will walk with you especially to the twilight years of your life and at that time after years of walking with Christ, he will be even in a closer presence. So we have identity, we have purpose and we have accountability.

Romans 1:18 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth

Romans 1:21 (ESV) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

So therefore when we go forward to John 16:8-9, which talks about Holy Spirit

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

What about sin? The biggest sin is the fact that he created you and don't live for him, you are not accountable to him, they do not believe him, which is Jesus Christ. The rejection of Jesus Christ is the sin which God talks about.

B. WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER WITH THE WORD

John 1:4-5 (ESV) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it

One of the most difficult verse is this one. It is difficult because John is switching back and forth and using a metaphor or picture of light and life in two different settings. So when you look at John chapter 1:1-18, he is saying the light in one way and when you look at John 1b down to 21 he is using light in a different way. The first way he uses is, light is the light of creation and the other way is the light of redemption. So there is a dual metaphor.

So here we have three pictures; life, light and darkness. In the prologue, John 1:1-18, this life is created life. The light is physical light of creation and darkness is the chaos before creation. So therefore John brings you back to Genesis and right in the beginning of time there was chaos and darkness and then God brings in his light and his light creates through the sun. At the same time, just as that happens he also means in John 1:21, the life was eternal. That means Jesus Christ not only created life, he has eternal life and this eternal life is the light of revelation to man and the darkness could not overcome it. It means unbelief cannot overcome the gospel, it is dual, it is absolutely beautiful.

So why does Jesus matter?

Jesus matters because the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. The light always overcomes. You go the darkest place on the planet, all you have to have is a flicker of light, as small as a firefly and it will never-never be overcome by darkness. That is what John is telling us. The fact that the gospel will triumph all over the world is as true and as permanent as creation that is what John is trying to tell us.

John The Baptist

John 1:6-8 (ESV) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John 1:9-13 (ESV) The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

The word comes and it always confronts and divides. It has got that affect. God says,

Isaiah 65:1-2 (ESV) I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, “Here I am, here I am,” to a nation that was not called by my name.² I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

God spread out his hands all day through the person of Jesus Christ and they do not accept him, but Hebrews says

Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV) Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

This is the last message we are going to get and it is through his son and this message will divide us. We are heralds of the gospel and Paul describes it as,

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John is trying to emphasize that it is not physical birth, it is a spiritual birth and it gives you the right to become children of God, a tremendous privilege. There are two different relationships in life, pagan or business relationship or a father-son relationship. The first kind of relationship is the business relationship, employer and employee. It is based on what you do, conditional if you perform you are accepted. So if you perform, work hard, I will pay you, if you don't perform I won't pay you. So therefore some of us have a business relationship with God.

When you are a child of God, you have intimacy with the king, you immediately go into his side, we have honor because we are children of God, we have security because he will never let us go and we have an inheritance which is in heaven.

C. HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THIS WORD?

There is a very interesting series at National Geographic, 'the story of God' by Morgan Freeman. It is very popular. What Morgan Freeman does is that he goes all over the world, in every different culture and he examines how people think of God, respond to God and he is trying to

draw a composite picture of what God really is by looking at all the various cultures. He is searching for God.

Socrates had great difficulty about this organizing principle called logos and he says that, *"Oh that someone would arise, man or god, to show us God."* He realized there is a limitation of how much you can think about and theorize about who God is.

Plato said, *"Unless a god man comes to us and reveals to us the Supreme Being, there is no help or hope."*

James Irwin, one of the astronauts, standing on the face of the moon looking at earth actually prayed for the first time in his life and he said, *"What is more important than man walking on the moon is that God should walk on earth."*

John 1:14-17 (ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

'The word became flesh'. This is astounding. The word became, which means there is a definitive event in time, you can't turn it back. He took upon human substance, it is a completed action, it is a time in the historical past.

'The eternal word was with God and he was with God and became flesh'. A person with two natures, the word as well as flesh. The flesh in Greek terms is yucky, it is degrading. For a Greek, you would never actually have the combination of the two natures and here you have a person with two natures that's why Matthew says,

Matt 1:23 Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name "Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

John writes later on

1 John 1:1 (ESV) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life

That means actual real human flesh, it is not make belief. We cannot save ourselves, the only way we could get salvation is where the word becomes one of us and God punishes him for all

our sin, that's the only way it is going to happen. It is an affirmation of our human existence that we as dirty frail human flesh, God actually condescend to come into our form that's a big deal. He identifies with us. When we are actually tempted, we cannot turn around and say God you don't really understand. He understands, because he was tempted in every single way worse than us, you know why, because he never succumbed and he is worthy of our adoration.

I was reading an article in Nat Geo in 2003. There was a guy called Dinesh Parmar, he was a bungi (a lowest cast of the lowest cast in Hindu system). His job was that he opens up that big hole in the ground called a septic tank, and all the cockroaches will come out and the pong is enough to kill you and he will jump right in. It is a dangerous job because of carbon monoxide. 22 people have already died going into the septic tank and take out dead animals and a lot of shit and everybody walks far-far away from him. Imagine, how many of us would like to go and take his place. We will never want to take his place. It is like when God comes in the world, it is as bad as that, we are talking about the almighty God, creator of heaven and earth becoming flesh, it is like that.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word dwelt is tabernacled. It draws us back to the idea of a tabernacle where the people of Israel had God being their God and they are his people and that is reflected in the fact that his presence is with them in this tabernacle and then Jesus is now saying that when I come, I will be the ultimate tabernacle, I will be the ultimate temple. In John chapter 2, he talks, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it. He sets the scene for John chapter 2.

John 1:14-17 (ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Glory in the Old Testament is someone's worthiness, heaviness, weightness as it were.

Exodus 40:34 (ESV) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:38 (ESV) For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys

So glory of God is manifested by a cloud, bright shining light, fire, but glory can be taken in a different sense. Glory comes in different forms. When we talk about concept of glory and the glory is actually the grace and truth. The phrase full of grace and truth, actually trigger something in your mind when you read this and it won't be really apparent, it is like certain phrases, it brings you back to a place in time. For example, if I say a long time ago in the galaxy far-far away, it triggers Star Wars in our mind.

Every time you have the Bible, they come up with a phrase and the phrase triggers, everybody knows. The trouble is you don't live in the world that the Bible, grace and truth, nobody cares. It brings you back to the time of Moses. Exodus 32-34 where when Moses went up there to get his two tablets from God, he came down with a headache because people started worshipping a golden cow and his brother Aaron was involved in that. Moses was really upset, God was really upset, they broke the tablets and he was going to punish the people, Moses came before God and he said, don't destroy them instead destroy me. He offered his life and what was in question was, will they be successful, because the actual existence is in jeopardy because they have betrayed the very God who saved them out of Egypt and it was a difficult situation and Moses was depressed, Moses was uncertain, Moses was alone because he lost his brother.

Moses was so depressed, the only thing that can get me through the next few years is that you show me who you are, show me your beauty, your glory then may be if I see you then I will have enough faith to go to the Promised Land, and he said,

"Please show me your glory." 19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." 21 And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

You can see His glory, traces of glory from backside but you can't see the front, otherwise you will die and that was enough for Moses. God's glory is his goodness.

Exodus 34:5-7 (ESV) The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

This is the same word which is then translated into grace and truth in the New Testament. So God is bringing us back, John is bringing us back to see the glory of God. It is not in the lights and the lightning and the clouds, it is actually grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ. Moses saw the shining light, we will see the hidden glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ through his grace, which is unmerited favor and love and truth.

So if you look in the Book of John, you will actually see later on there will be seven signs in the first 11 chapters and each of these signs or miracles show in some part his glory. His glory is shown with power and purpose and it expresses his love and faithfulness to the people. The 7 miracles that Jesus did were:

- Jesus turned water into wine.
- He heals the sick boy.
- He heals the lame man.
- He feeds 5000 people.
- He is walking on the water.
- He heals a blind man.
- He raises Lazarus from the dead.

The miracles of Jesus are display of his power and purpose. The power is the miracle. The purpose is that each miracle is designed to meet a human need and displays the grace and love of God. He meets the need when he turns water into wine. He meets a need when the boy is sick. He meets a need for a man lame for 30 something years. He meets needs when there are hungry 5000 people. He meets the need when the disciples are trapped in the storm and he is seen walking on water. He meets the need when Lazarus dies, always a purpose and power.

Jesus shows his glory through his goodness, through the signs and finally the ultimate glory is death on the cross, where he dies for all of us. Not only is that, we also have the hiddenness of his glory where he provides the grace and the ability to have faith. The ability to have faith is also a dispensation of grace from Jesus Christ.

Bono, a U2 singer, has become a Christian and he is really active with the word and works of charity. He says,

The idea that God, if there is a force of Love and Logic in the universe, that it would seek to explain itself is amazing enough. That it would seek to explain itself by becoming a child born in poverty ... and straw, a child, I just thought, "Wow!" Just the poetry

... I saw the genius of picking a particular point in time and deciding to turn on this ... Love needs to find a form; intimacy needs to be whispered ... Love has to become an action or something concrete. It would have to happen. There must be an incarnation. Love must be made flesh.

This is the explanation of his life, only love can touch the human heart.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

As we spend time with God and His word, we see more and more of him and we are transformed as we fall in love with him.

THE CHALLENGE

People are still looking out for God, but God has already arrived 2000 years ago. People persecute Christians because they are afraid, they are afraid of the truth, when the truth comes out you are terrified, because truth will change your world, it will rock your life. So therefore if you don't understand the truth, you don't want the truth, you reject the truth and you try to burn it, you try to destroy it, you try all sorts of ways.

The British are great at preserving things. They got 215 museums in London. They never throw anything away. They preserve the form but they miss the power. If you go to Britain today, there are not many churches left, they are struggling. They have preserved the most ancient Bibles with them but their faith has gone down completely. It is a paradox, and this paradox is also apparent in our own lives. We can preserve the form but deny its power. We have the form sometimes but we don't have the power, it doesn't come alive for us. We need to understand that the Word comes, it is a life pulsating word that can actually change your life. The non-Christians out there know that. They burn the bibles because they are terrified of the truth. We have the truth but we preserve it but we deny its power. We don't let it come into our life, we don't let it engage in all the difficult decisions of our lives, that's the sad part of our encounter with the word.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." 9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people:" 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' (Isaiah 6:8-9 (ESV) 8)

This is like the British, you can read it but you don't understand it, you don't perceive it and you just preserve it, the only difference that will breakthrough in this situation is an actual desire in our hearts to see the power explode in our lives. So we've got to make that step today to say, "I want this word to be a living power in my life" and one of the only ways to do it is to join a discipleship, a live group or gamma or alpha because we can see the Word of God in each other's life, how it works and we can hold each other accountable to see how the word is actually transforming and pulsating in our lives. We will let it answer all the difficult questions of life. That's our first step, God will do the rest.

Max Planck is one of the world's foremost pioneers in science. He developed quantum theory many years ago and he actually won a noble prize.

The story was told of the most brilliant scientist in Germany called Max Planck who won the Noble price for physics when he discovered quantum physics revolutionised the understanding of atomic and subatomic processes. He was travelling the country giving lectures about quantum theory at every town. He gave it so often that soon even his chauffeur reckoned he had memorised every word of it and could give the exact same lecture if given half the chance. Finally, at one town he persuaded the great scientist to give him a go and the chauffeur took to the stage whilst Max Planck humbly put on the chauffeur's hat and sat below at the front row. The chauffeur was actually right and he delivered the lecture flawlessly and with great flourish mimicking his brilliant boss. However, at the end of the lecture, someone asked him a difficult question...The chauffeur was a little stunned but then a smile came across his face and proclaimed that this was indeed such a simple question that even his own chauffeur who is sitting down there on the front row could answer and indeed Max Planck himself proceeded to answer the man.

Some of us are like that, the easy part is just doing the lecture, the hard part is actually understanding the word. Some of us read the word simply because it is in our quiet time, we got to do this my obligation to God, it is like a business relationship. If I don't do it, something will happen to my business, that's is how we do. We don't actually allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives and take that word and apply it to the difficult questions of your life. We don't let it come in and as long as we hold God at that kind of level, the word will never pulsate with life, the word will never pulsate with power if we keep it a bay.